

SOME SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS OF THE LAWĀ (N.W.—THAILAND)

Part I*

by

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This is a report on ethnographic material brought back from three visits to the Umphāi group of villages and the first anthropological survey of the northern Lawā.

A. Introductory remarks

1. Itineraries

In the following detailed dates, the Sgō-Karēn villages where we had to stay overnight are given in brackets. B. before village names is Thai: bān (บ้าน) = village.

All starts were taken from B.B5 Luang where we stayed in the house of the headmaster Khun Khrū Suchāt Tinnalag (คุณครู สุชาติ ทินนลภ) who also was on the second and third tours, a very reliable organiser and highly qualified interpreter.

1) 3.2.-12.2.1962: This first tour was led by Nāi Kritsadā Premānon (นาย กฤษดา เปรมานนท์), who was very helpful at filming, at that time one of my main occupations. The ethnographic aims were to find and study the thread-square (or thread-cross, cf. section on death-rites) in its context, megalithic aspects and to gain a general impression of the Lawā and their culture. All six villages of the Umphāi group were visited.

The route: (Karēn workers' camp at the trunkroad bridge then under construction near B.Māe Rid, บ.แม่ริด)—one night in the jungle—(B.Māe Āeb, บ.แม่แอบ)—B.Yāeg, บ.เย็ก, of the Umphāi group; and back: (B.Māe Thō Luang, บ.แม่โถหลวง)—B.Kōng Lōi, บ.กองลอย.

2) 4.2.-14.2.1964: From km 58 (2 km west of Kōng Lōi)—(B.Māe Thō Luang)—one night in a fieldhut at the foot of Umphāi hill—B.Yāeg. Again visit of the six villages; notes on the thread-square rectified and amplified; studies of art, ritual houses, sacrificial and memorial posts; assisted at death ceremonies.

* Part I will be followed by another one or two parts.

TABLE 1

Itinerary of our tour to the northern Lawā,

28.12.1968–18.1.1969

- 28.12.68 B.Yāg (Umphāi)–B.Tūn 9.30-14.00 = $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours ./ rest 1 h.
 29.12. Stay in B.Tūn
 30.12. B.Tūn–B.Sām 9.30-18.00 = $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours ./ rest $1\frac{1}{2}$ h.
 31.12. Stay in B.Sām
 1.1.69 B.Sām–(B.Māe Hāe Nuea, Sgō-Karēn) 10.00-14.30 = $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours
 ./ rest $\frac{1}{2}$ h.
 2.1. (B.Māe Hāe Nuea)–B.Mūēd Lōng 10.00-14.00 = 4 hours ./ rest $\frac{1}{2}$ h.
 3.1. B.Mūēd Lōng–B.Gōg Nōi 10.30-18.00 = $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours ./ rest $\frac{1}{2}$ h.
 (porters on shortcut 5 hours)
 4.1. B.Gōg Nōi–B.Hō' 11.30-17.00 = $5\frac{1}{2}$ hours ./ rest 1 h.
 (porters on shortcut $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours)
 5.1. Stay in B.Hō'
 6.1. B.Hō'–B.Khōng 11.00-16.30 = $5\frac{1}{2}$ hours ./ rest 1 h.
 (porters on shortcut $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours)
 7.1. B.Khōng–B.Gōg Luang 10.00-18.00 = 8 hours ./ rest $\frac{1}{2}$ h.
 8.1. Stay in B.Gōg Luang
 9.1. B.Gōg Luang–B.Pae' 10.00-16.00 = 6 hours ./ rest $\frac{1}{2}$ h.
 10.1. Stay in B.Pae'
 11.1. B.Pae'–(B.Māe Hāe Tai, Sgō-Karēn) 12.00-16.00 = 4 hours ./ rest $\frac{1}{2}$ h.
 12.1. (B.Māe Hāe Tai)–(Lunch-break at B.Hō Thikhi, Sgō Karen) 10.30-13.00 = $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours ./ rest $\frac{1}{2}$ h. (B.Hō Thikhī)–B.La'āng Nuea 15.00-16.00 = 1 hour
 13.1. B.La'āng Nuea–B.La'āng Tāi 10.00-13.30 = $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours ./ rest $\frac{1}{2}$ h.
 14.1. B.La'āng Tāi–B.Dong 9.00-13.15 = $4\frac{1}{4}$ hours ./ rest $1\frac{1}{2}$ h.
 15.1. B.Dong–B.La'ub 12.00-15.00 = 3 hours
 16.1. B.La'ub–(B.Gōng Pāe, Sgō Karēn) 10.00-15.00 = 5 hours ./ rest $1\frac{1}{2}$ h.
 17.1. (B.Gōng Pāe)–(B.Bāsa' ta', Pwo Karēn?) 10.15-16.00 = $5\frac{3}{4}$ hours ./ rest $1\frac{1}{2}$ h.
 18.1. (B.Bāsa' ta')–B.Māelānōi 10.00-11.40 = $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours.

total $84\frac{3}{4}$ hours

./ rest 12 hours

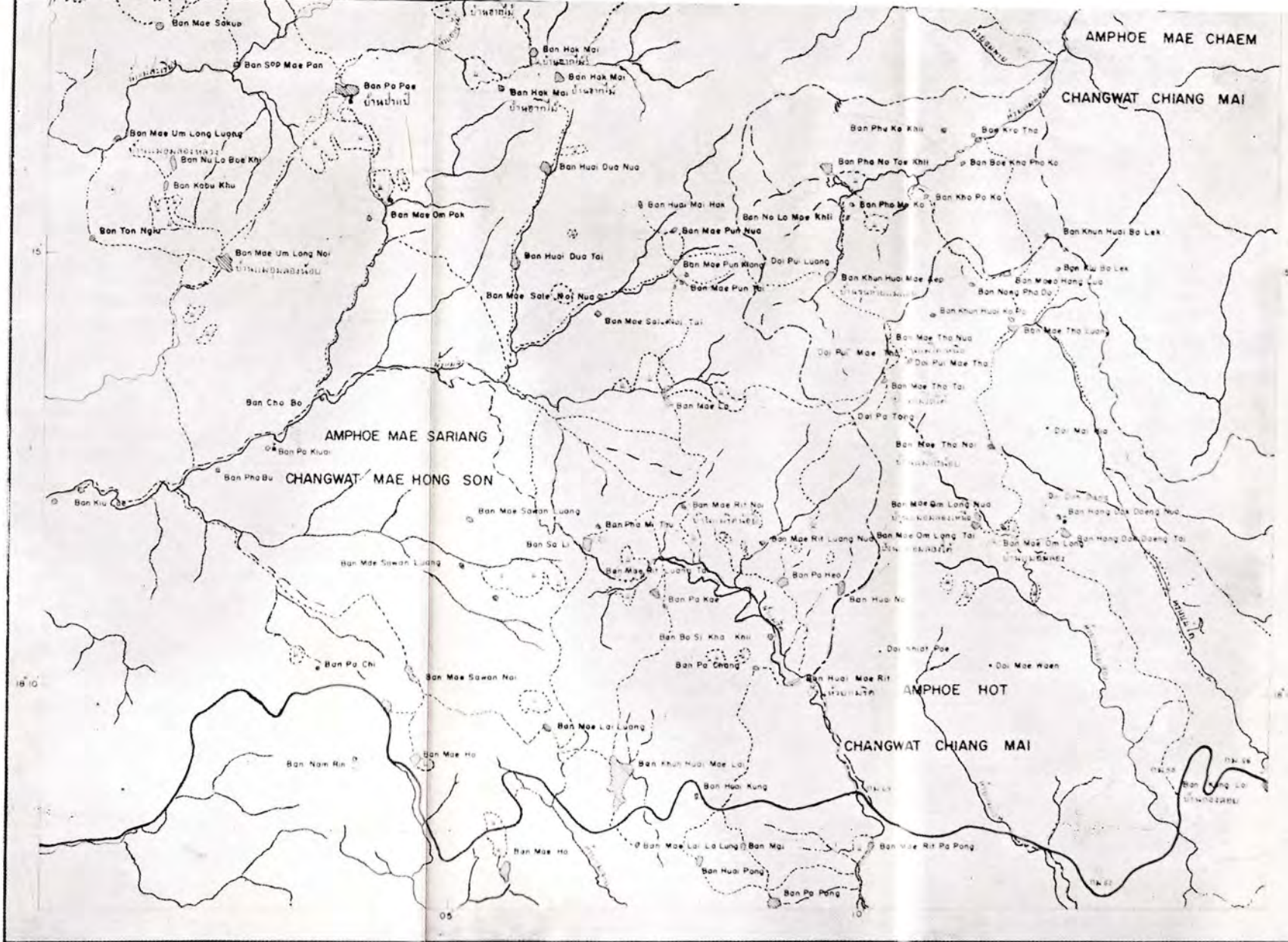
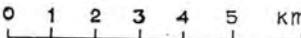
net hours of march $72\frac{3}{4}$ hours

LAWĀ HILLS

1: 125.000

Reduced From The Corrected Map

Thailand 1:50,000





Way back : (B.Huai Hagmāi Tāi, บ.ห้วยหักไม้ไผ่)—B.La'ub, บ.ละอูบ—B.Pā Pāe, บ.ป่าเป้า—trunkroad east of Maesariang.

3) 23.12.1968-18.1.1969 : Kōng Lōi—(B.Māe Thō Luang)—B.Yāeg. More on social and religious items.

On 28.12.68, departure from our quarters in the ritual house of B.Yāeg to the north, passing through B.Chāngmō Manōd and B.Chāngmō Nōi. The day by day itinerary of the tour to the Northern Lawā is detailed on Table 1.

In B.Tūn, B.Sām, B.Hō', B.Gōg Luang and B.Pae' we stayed two nights, in all other places only one night. Though we concentrated our inquiries on a few themes—leading personalities, ritual house and sacrificial posts, ancestor spirits, death-rites, handicrafts and art—shortness of time made it impossible, as will be understood, to draw a complete and conclusive picture in every respect. Often enough our queries stayed unanswered for our informants' lack of knowledge or for their reluctance to reveal what they thought better kept secret. Furthermore from B.Tūn to B.Mūēd Lōng, Khun Suchāt's health was slightly impaired (a fact which is reflected in defective information from these villages).

2. Karēn intrusion

I have given the above itineraries purposely to show that nowadays it is practically impossible to tour the Lawā hills without an occasional stopover in Karēn villages. North of B.Gōg Luang, the northernmost Lawā village, we were assured all villages were Karēn. There might be the odd Māeo village also, but definitely no more Lawā ones. According to Kunstadter (1969, 234) Sgō-Karēn coming from Burma have slowly infiltrated what had been exclusively Lawā land for about the past 120 years (c.1850). They first appeared in small groups, modestly asking the then wealthy Lawā, owners of fields and elephants, to take on lease some fields "in exchange for 10 per cent of the annual rice crop" (Kunstadter, 1966 A, 66; 1969, 234). This was approved by the Prince of Chiangmai who demanded tribute from both Lawā and Karēn. Since then this process has continued and now the Lawā settlements are interspersed by Karēn ones; or, as Nāi Kham Sug of B.Yāeg put it more drastically, all Lawā villages are menaced by a growing encirclement of Karēn. One need only look at the map (southern part) to see the once Lawā-owned hills now teeming with Karēn villages and hamlets. Of this

state of affairs, Kunstadter (1970, 3) has given a particularly clear picture: "The hills in a rectangle 20 km. to the north and 18 km. to the east of the town of Mae Sariang were once the exclusive property of the three Lua' villages of Pa Pae, Ban Dong, and La'ub. Now the spaces between these Lua' villages have been filled with about 30 Karen hamlets, whose total population is probably three times that of the Lua' villages."

There are also mixed tribal villages where Lawā and Karēn live peacefully side by side. Of the 46 houses of B.Ho', 20 in the western upper village have been Karēn for at least three generations. The grandfather of the present headman Run Khunwong divided the village: the upper western part was reserved for the Karēn, the rest was to go to the Lawā. The headman is responsible for the Karēn quarter also. In B.Gog Luang, of 68 houses 12 are Karēn, and two houses flush with the ground are H5 traders' shops.

The process of the encroachment of the Karēn on Lawā land and the successive impoverishment of the Lawā, who were still well-to-do 120 years ago, has been clearly described by Kunstadter (1969, 234/35). Furthermore the Lawā had at an earlier date lost much of their lowland property to the Thai. They have good humoured tales about the cleverness of the Thai and the foolishness of their naive ancestors (Kunstadter 1969, 232). A story of this kind I learned in B.Sām :

The *yong blōng*¹ once trapped many stags (*jag*) and kept them in fences for food. One day Thai traders came up with ponies, and when they saw the stags they readily exchanged a pony for each stag, so getting all the stags. The Lawā thought, well, a horse is bigger than a stag and through this exchange we will have more meat. The Thai killed the stags, dried the meat and the skins for easier carrying, and took all, including the horns, down to town.

The next day the Lawā wanted to kill a horse for food. They went to open the fence, but lo – in a moment all the horses had run out and galloped back to their former masters.

There is yet another story, from B.Ho' this time, of the Karēn profiting from the Lawā. On our list of northern Lawā villages to be visited B. Thuan (၁၂၇၈, Lawā: Yuang Thuan) originally was noted, but we soon found that this village had been Karēn for quite a long time.

1) *yong* : community of one of the ritual houses.

blōng : horse. M.C. Sanidh Rangsit, 1942/45 701 : *mbrōng*

jag : stag. „ „ „ „ 699 : *t'āk*

The legend of Bān Thuan

In the olden days Bān Thuan possessed a sacred pond containing the water of immortality. All villagers drank of it, so nobody died. One day a group of villagers of Bān Thuan went to a Karēn village and there a dead man happened to be being carried to the grave-yard with gongs beating. The Lawā of Bān Thuan thought this most laughable and bought the corpse, the gongs and all the other paraphernalia to have the same fun in their own village. They carried everything to Bān Thuan and walked around with laughter and rejoicing.

But the village spirit became furious over such stupid behaviour and punished them by withdrawing the sacred water of immortality. On the same day all those died who had brought the corpse into the village. The pond dried up, there was no more water, and this is the reason why the people of Bān Thuan emigrated. Five of their families live now in Bān Hō' where they have their own *nyoe' nyū* (ritual house).

The dried up pond is still to be seen nowadays at Bān Thuan. The Karēn, more astute, took over the fields and do not mind going a long way to fetch water.

3. Moral disintegration

The influence of the Karēn, which is certainly strong in many respects, and the missionaries' eagerness for proselytizing are not the only factors in the progressive decay of Lawā culture. To these energetic and fleet-footed hill people the extremely steep and treacherous paths are no obstacle in reaching, relatively quickly, the small market-towns of Maesariang, Maelanai and Maejaem, which are active centres in Thailand's domestic trading system. The young men working during the cold season on the roads, in teakwoods, in mines, etc., see all the modern means of communications, bicycles, motorcycles, cars, transistors and a great many other useful objects, so they feel that life is easier and more profitable down there. Why should they spend money on spirit sacrifices if they can buy some more tangible assets for the same amount? Parallel to this there is "a decrease in interest in megalithic conceptions" (Kauffmann, 1971, 147). Nāi Kham Sug of B.Yāeg opines that the ancient customs are neglected more and more, especially in the northern villages, so that within the next 20 years belief in *phī* (spirits) will become extinct,

With the firm religious pattern dwindling, many families turn their backs to the hills and settle down in one of the two so-called Lawā suburbs of Maesariang. So for example did two families from B. Tūn who just when we visited were feeding their ancestor spirits for the last time. And when we left the hills in January 1969, 15 families out of the three Chāngmō villages of the Umphāi group were leaving their homes for good to move with bag and baggage down to Maesariang. Kunstadter wrote (1970, 4) that within the last generation 15-20% of the hill Lawā of Maesariang District had emigrated to the plains.

Nai Lū, the *gorīd* (see p. 279) of B.Yāg, thinks that within the next ten years there will be no more Chāngmō villages at all. He has travelled several times to Chiangmai and grumblingly uttered: "Look at that Chinese of "Thantraphan" Department Store, no spirits, no *la'māng* (ancestor spirits), and he is a millionaire. We are sacrificing to the *phī* all the year round, but still stay poor."

4. Māeo

In 1962 we passed through B.Māeo Gao Lua' (บ.แม่วะถ้ำ, lit. "once Lawā now Māeo village"), a wretched hamlet of four or five huts on the path leading from Umphāi along the Dōi Bō Hāe (ดอยบ่อฮั่ว, lit. "mountain of ore mines") to B.Māe Thō Luang. In later years I have not seen this hamlet, mentioned also by Obayashi (1964, 200). Certainly the people have moved further on; it is interesting to learn that this place was once a Lawā village, and it is not the only one which has disappeared.

In 1969 we passed through B.Māeo Māe Thō (บ.แม่วะหมื่น) of the Blue Māeo, north of B.Māe Thō Luang, a village of more than 100 houses and a shop run by a Hō. Some sections are in Amphoe Hōd and some in Amphoe Māejāem.

B.Māeo Khun Māe Hāe (บ.แม่วะขุนแม่ฮั่ว) has only two families and a Hō shop. It is situated one hour east of B.Yāng Māe Hāe Nuea (บ.ยางแม่ฮั่วเหนือ) where we stayed overnight, while Khun Suchāt and some porters went there to buy provisions.

At B.Yāng Māe Hāe Nuea we were told that there is no communication between Lawā and Māeo, as the latter trade opium and the Lawā generally are not addicts. Still, we noted some well-tended poppy fields

of the Lawā along the path from B.Gəg Luang to B.Pae', though they were far smaller than the Māo's. On the contrary, the Karēn smoke opium and therefore have connections with the Māo. However, Karēn and Māo are often in dispute about fields. Between the Māo of B.Māo Māe Thō and the Lawā of B.B5 Luang there is a special relationship: if the Māo lack labourers for their opium fields, they hire them from B.B5 Luang, and if they have not enough rice they also buy from B.B5 Luang, where the quality is the same as of Māo rice.

These notes give some insight into the way in which the Māo fit in the interstices between Lawā and Karēn and of the role they fulfill.

5. Missions

About 20 missionaries (American, French, Italian, Spanish) were said to roam the region. On the way we passed an Italian missionary and later met the wife of an American one; she spoke fluent Lawā and made B.La'ub—Māelan5i in one day.

When I visited B.La'ub in 1964 there were 12 houses of Protestant Christians. Kunstadter remarks (1965, 27) that at the time of his visit there were about 20 Christian families in B.La'ub out of a total of about 100 families; in B.Pā Pā he noted only two Christian families.

I would not have noticed the Christians in B.La'ub but for their singing in the evening. This reminded me of the Naga Hills in Assam where by singing and even more by disturbing the feasts of their 'heathen' brethren, the Christians provoked such conflict that the then British administration was compelled to separate the quarrellers into two different villages. Even with the Lawā, who are by no means pugnacious, the "relationship between Christian and non-Christian is not always so good. The Christians have tended to set themselves apart (e.g. by fencing their properties), and village leaders sometimes do not even include them in enumeration of village residents" (Kunstadter 1965, 29). In Lawā villages where Christian households increased, "a settlement had to be negotiated between the Christians and the animists... to maintain the solidarity of the village." By a compromise, "the Christians agreed to buy portions of the meat of the pigs or buffalos slaughtered at communal ceremonies, thus helping to share the cost of the ceremonies without actually participating directly in them" (Kunstadter, 1969 A, 233).

In the above-mentioned B.Hs', of the 20 Karēn houses 15 have been Catholic since only about 1964. In B.Pae', a small house has been built for an Italian Catholic missionary who makes his appearance very rarely and, as they said with joyous laughter, for five years has been trying in vain to make converts. A Catholic (?) missionary once passed through B.Gōg Luang. In B.Dong, with a big Border Patrol Police school, there is no missionary. To sum up, with the exception of B.La'ub, the missions do not seem to have made great inroads on the Lawā up to the present.

B. The Lawā villages

1. In general

In earlier research there was much guesswork as to the number of villages, houses and populations. So we tried to establish a more accurate picture. Unfortunately our efforts were hampered by the absence of headmen at a district assembly.

As can be gathered from Table 2 there are: 19 villages of Hill Lawā who can still be considered to be attached to their old culture, and 9 villages of the B5 Luang group on the high plateau south of the Lawā hills.

B.B5 Luang (called north of the Umphai group: To' sa' mó'=ore-mining-people, alluding to their former occupation) has two Buddhist wats, and there is one each in B.Khun, B.Wang Gōng and B.Nā Fōn. So there is a long-standing Buddhist influence. In addition the B5 Luang group is generally classified as "thai-ized" which denomination must rather be understood as "north-thai-ized", because its original Lawā culture was greatly affected by the North-Thai, Yuon or Khon Mueang whose language "is narrowly akin to Lao" (Wenk, 1959, 112, note 16), and not by the Central Thai, who are very different in many respects.

In reality, the B5 Luang group is, with the exception of B.B5 Sali and B.Tōng Luang (Table 2, nos. 27 and 28) which are now 80 per cent Thai according to Khun Suchāt, by far less thai-ized than would appear from earlier literature. Indeed, they still speak the Lawā language and a variety of Lawā customs still persist. But though these B5 Luang

TABLE 2
The villages of the Lawā, January 1969

Thai-name		Lawā-name	Approx. altitude	Houses	Headman	Changwat	Amphoe	Tambon
Southern Lawā								
1. Bān Den	บ. เด็น	Yuang Monggri'	} 1137 m	24	Ping Chumphut บัง ชุมพูช	Maehongson	Maesariang	Maesariang
2. " Yæg	" แยก	" Yia'		11	" "	"	"	"
3. " Ōmphāi Luang	" อมพาหหลวง	" Ting (ตัง)		17	" "	"	"	"
4. " Chāngmī Manōd (Ōmnōd)	" ช่างหม่อมมอด (อมนอด)	" Ōmmadoi		17	" "	"	"	"
5. " Chāngmī Nōi	" ช่างหมอน้อย	" Gōng	1220 m	27	" "	"	"	"
6. " Chāngmī Luang	" ช่างหม้อหลวง	" Tiam		43	" "	"	"	"
7. " Tūn	" ดูน	" Dū		31	Un Khamjan อุณ คำจัน	"	Maelanōi (Ging Amphoe)	Maelanōi
8. " Pāpāe	" ป่านเป	" Jāoc (Mo Hong)	720 m	51	Kæ Ta Kham Mueangngām คำ เมืองงาม	"	Maesariang	Maesariang
Northern Lawā								
9. Bān Sām	" สาม	" Sām	1180 m	31	Kham Tui คำ ตู้ย	"	Maelanōi (Gin Amphoe)	Maelanōi
10. " Muēd Lōng	" มีดลอง	" Hlaung	1100 m	35	Kham Sāo คำ ชาว	Chiangmai	Maesariang	Bān Thab
11. " Gōg Nōi	" กอกน้อย	" Mogoci (Mogai)	1050 m	35	Gōn Banyāyom กว บัญญายอม	"	"	"
12. " Hō'	" เขาะ	" Ro' (ไระ)	1100-1150 m	46 (20 Karēn)	Run Khunwong รุน ขุนวงศ์	"	"	"
13. " Khōng	" ข้อง	" Khrāu	960 m	33	Phud Tānon พุด ตานนท์	"	"	"
14. " Gōg Luang	" กอกหลวง	" Gog (กั)	1110 m	68 (12 Karēn, 2 Hō)	Mueang Sāngjām เมือง แสงงาม	Maehongson	Maelanōi (Ging Amphoe)	Maelanōi
15. " Pae'	" เปะ	" Bae' (Be', Pre')	1260 m	60	Mueang Pung เมือง ปุง	Chiangmai	Maesariang	Bān Thab
16. " La'āng Nuea	" ละอองเหนือ	" Rang Lāung (= high) (La'haung)	1160 m	24	Bau Khamhucan เบา คำฮ้อน	Maehongson	Maelanōi (Ging Amphoe)	Maelanōi
17. " La'āng Tāi	" ละอองใต้	" " Dīam (= low)	1140 m	9	Lēng เล้ง	"	"	"
18. " Dong	" ดง	" Nōng	1090 m	96	Bunthā Gēnbiang บุนทา เกนเบียน	"	"	"
19. " La'ub	" ละอูบ	" La-ue' (La-ueg, La'og)	1100-1160 m	92	Nōn Phadnōi โนน ผัดน้อย	"	"	"
B5 Luang Group								
20. Bān B5 Luang	" บ่อหลวง	" La' (= big village)	312	312	Sāo Jūwaen สาว จูแวน	Chiangmai	Hōd	B5 Luang
21. " Giu Lom	" กวลม	" Tū Balāe			" "	"	"	"
22. " Khun	" ขุน	" Ta' Nafūan			" "	"	"	"
23. " Wang Gōng	" วงทอง	" Wang Gōng			" "	"	"	"
24. " Nā Fōn	" นาพอน	" Nafūan			" "	"	"	"
25. " Māe Sa'nām	" แม่สะนาม	" Phóphoi			" "	"	"	"
26. " Gōng Lōi	" กงลอย	" Gōng Roi			" "	"	"	"
27. " B5 Sali	" บ่อสลี	" Mae' Sari			" "	"	"	"
28. " Tōng Luang	" ทองหลวง	" Tōng Luang			" "	"	"	"

villages deserve a more thorough enquiry and description I must here desist from it and concentrate on the largely unadulterated hill villages.

These I have divided tentatively into a southern and a northern group for reasons which can only be discussed later when all the points of possible comparison have been set out. The names of the villages in Table 2 are written according to the map² (with slight phonetic changes). The northern villages are quoted in the order we visited them. The names, in use by the Thai administration, are followed by their Thai spelling; as for the original Lawā names (and other Lawā words) we merely tried to reproduce a few of them in Thai script. Village = yuang in B.B5 Luang and Umphāi, but yūeng in Mapae (Rangsit 1942/45, 689); in the villages 11-17 of Table 2, i.e. most of the northern ones, they said yūen. The Lawā village names, as well as the number of houses and the names of the headmen, I obtained from Khun Suchāt; there might be the odd error.

The reading of the altitudes was at first somewhat uncertain. I adjusted my altimeter at 1305 m engraved in a big tree at the trunk-road near B.B5 Luang; of course I could not correct it en route. Now, Hallett (1890, 54) gives for B.B5 Luang 3704 feet = 1128.97 m only, and three figures from the Military Map Department—B.Yæg/Ōmphāi Luang 1137 m, La' ub 1100-1160 m and Pā Pāe 720 m—showed that my results were about 200 m too high, which as a consequence I deducted from my original measurements. We might fairly safely assume that the highest villages are B.Pae' at about 1260 m and B.Tūn at about 1220 m, while the lowest ones are B.Khōng at 960 m and B.Pā Pāe at 720 m; the others are between 1050 m and 1180 m, so that the remark of M.C. Sanidh Rangsit (1945, 494): "The villages are situated at an average height of 1000 m" is approximately correct.

As there has been some confusion through erroneous maps and notes, in the last columns of Table 2, province (changwat), district (amphoe) and subdistrict (tambon) are given for every village. Only five are in changwat Chiangmai and all of these in amphoe Maejaem; the rest are in

2) The map, Thailand 1:50,000 is nos. 4665 IV, 4666 III, 4666 IV.

Here I want to give my best thanks to Lt. Bunsag (ร้อยตรี บุญศักดิ์) of the Military Map Department (กรมแผนที่ทหาร) who under Lt. Col. Prasit Loglueang (พันโท ประสิทธิ์ โลกลืออง), Chief of the Map-making Division from Air-photographs, has drawn a corrected map according to his own cartographical work in the Lawā hills. The southern part was drawn in 1964, the northern in 1969, which accounts for the differences in the drawing.

changwat Maehongson, seven each in amphoe Maesariang and in ging-amphoe Maelanoi (a ging-amphoe is a branch of an amphoe which has become too large and unwieldy). The entire B5 Luang group belongs to changwat Chiangmai, amphoe H5d, tambon B5 Luang.

2. Details on individual villages

Umphāi group

The name of Umphāi is pronounced ʔmphāi (อัมพาย) by the people themselves and it is also so written on the map. Since for many decades it was spelled Umphāi by earlier research-workers, I intend to follow this practice, at least for the term "Umphāi group"; similarly I do not intend to alter the tribal name into Lua', which latter is the North-Thai designation for it.

The Umphāi group consists of six villages with only one headman (*phū yai bān*, *phī bān* or *gāe bān*, ผู้ใหญ่บ้าน พ่อบ้าน หรือ แก่บ้าน): Nāi Ping Chum-phút. He was already headman in 1962 and remained so in 1968. In 1964 he told us that he had nine deputies or helpers (*phū chuai*, ผู้ช่วย) for the whole village group.

Umphāi is situated on a ridge extending in a westnorthwest direction. In the northeast, behind three ridges, 30-40 km distant, D5i Anggā (ดอยอ่างกา, also D5i Inthanon) is to be seen, at 2576 m, the highest mountain of Thailand. B.ʔmphai Luang is recognizable from very far by its high rang-tree (it has white flowers, uneatable fruits and is most likely *Ficus* sp. *altissima*, Moraceae).

From southeast to northwest the Umphāi villages are: B.Den="at the top, the highest, the most prominent, the best one"; extravagant praise is lavished upon it thus: "in B.Den everybody is wealthy". In former years it was called B.ʔmphāi N5i (บ. อัมพายน้อย=little ʔmphāi). Of 28 houses in 1964 only 24 were left in 1968. The village is about a quarter of an hour downhill from B.Yæg.

B.Yæg="to branch off". Here the paths from B.Den and K5ng L5i-Mæ Thō Luang meet. The headman resides in this village. Without the slightest gap it goes over into:

B.Ōmphāi Luang—greater Ōmphāi. The name must be a Lawā word without known significance. Once a writer asserted that *um* meant water (Rangsit 1942/45, 703: water=*ra-aum*). This, indeed, would be very strange, as there is no water near “Um” phāi. Women and children have to go more than half an hour downhill to fetch it. We had to pay 50 Satang for every bamboo of water brought up.³

While in 1964 there were 16 houses, in 1968 only one more had been added.

B.Changmō Manōd, also B.Ōmnōd, from B.Ōmphāi Luang half an hour to westnorthwest, 18 houses in 1964, one less in 1968. Chāngmō in Thai is potter; the significance of Manōd or Ōmnōd is unknown.

B.Changmō Nōi=Little potters' village, lies just a slope down below the above.

B.Changmō Luang=Great potters' village, is not situated on the Umphāi ridge but one hour distant from B.Ōmphāi Luang, straight to the west of B.Chāngmō Nōi.

A saying goes in B.Ōmphāi Luang with B.Ōmphāi Nōi (now B.Den) and B.Yāeg: “We are like brothers, the three Chāngmō villages are only twigs of the tree, for everything the initial point is B.Ōmphāi.” No wonder, as it is, together with B.Den and B.Yāeg, the biggest *samang* village in the hills. Ōmphāi people often speak in this way: “Of such and such a thing other villages have less or nothing, and why? Because we are great and the rest of them petty. Ōmphāi stands before all other Lawā.” This is acknowledged by many Lawā villages. In B.La' ub they said: “Our custom is not anymore as strong as in B.Ōmphāi, yet still stronger than in B.Pā Pāe.” B.La' ub, however, does not originate from B.Ōmphāi; it is very old itself. In earlier times the *samangs* of B.Ōmphāi had so much authority that they could convene meetings for deliberation with other Lawā villages; the informants named about all the northern ones (Table 2, nos. 9-18) and said: “In those days customs were very strict, nowadays many have gone but still B.Ōmphāi is authoritative.”

3) Still, Rangsit 1942/45, 693, gives: *om*=Water in Pa Pao-Lawa and four Wa dialects in Burma.

It is not by accident that nearly all those who ever did research-work on the hill Lawā called Umphāi the foremost village of the Lawā: in 1935 Hutchinson wrote of "the strong-hold of Um Pai" (1935, 154), and this was taken up by Seidenfaden: "a Lawa stronghold called Umphai" (1940, 29). Similarly, Steinmann/Rangsit (1939, 173) spoke of "Umphai, the most important village of all" and Obayashi (1964, 199) again called it "Umphai, the stronghold of the Lawa" and later (1966, 251/52: "Umphai, which is reputed to be the centre of the Lawa territory." Wenk (1965, 107) referred to the vocabulary of Rangsit (1942/45) "which is the most significant because it renders the language of the Umphai-Lāwā, a group until today least thai-ized." In "Minority groups in Thailand" (1970, 939) the compiler remarked: "Umpai, where the ancient language and culture have been preserved in their purest form"; and I myself, after having visited all of the still existing hill villages, stated (1971, 139): "If we assume that once the Lawā villages shared a common cultural pattern, then at this time only the Umphāi group holds strongly to ancient customs." On the other hand, it is surprising that Kunstadter, the only scholar who has lived with the Lawā for many months, mentioned Umphāi only once or twice in his wealth of otherwise excellent publications; instead of Umphāi he insisted on speaking of an unspecified 'Chāngmō' (as does Srisawasdi, 1963, 180, 182), until he finally identified it with "Chāngmō Nōi, known as 'uang gong' in Lua" (Kunstadter 1967, 8).

The following remarks give some general aspects of the unknown northern villages. There will be more specific details in subsequent sections.

Bān Tūn

This village of 31 houses was totally destroyed around 1963 when 34 houses burnt down. Thereupon the village was split up into three parts: about 10 houses were rebuilt on the old village site; a new village was set up at about 15 minutes walk to the south; and a third village was built up the hill at a greater distance (which for lack of time we did not visit). From the southern quarter there is a splendid view of Dōi Anggā (Inthanon) in the east and over the deep valley of the Huai

Maē Hō' (หม่อมฮ้าง) in the south to B.Chāngmō Nōi overlooked by B.Chāngmō Manōd and, quite distant from them, in a south-western direction, to B.Chāngmō Luang.

Bān Sām

The sprawling houses, on posts at least 2 m high, with their high, massive and low-eaved roofs, are more imposing than in any other Lawā village. There are some gardens behind bamboo fences with flowers, vegetables, and bananas. At one place two men with a long saw cut planks very accurately, one man standing on a scaffold hauling the blade up, the other one standing below pulling it down. The same sawing system I observed in Banderban, Chittagong Hill Tracts, what was then East Pakistan.

The people remember that they have been here for three generations; they came from another village, possibly B.Pae'. Originally they all lived peacefully together, but when disagreement arose, they split into four sections, each one disposing of a *nyoe' nyū* (ritual house).

Bān Muēd Lōng

Behind the village there is a big mountain which blocks off the sun's rays other than for about three hours everyday. The inhabitants wondered why their forefathers chose this place, despite these obvious disadvantages, but said: "We do not change because we planted trees here, and as for the rest: we are still alive."

Bān Hō'

The village fills the western, northern and eastern slopes of a wide and deep basin. The gables of the porches are mostly turned to the East, but there is no special system; the houses are put up as best suits the terrain. East of B.Hō' lies the Dōi Luang (ดอยหลวง, Thai: Big mountain) whose mountain spirit *mō anggrīa* is revered by most Lawā villages.

Bān Gəg Luang

This northernmost village has 54 Lawā and 12 Karēn houses, all of them on wooden posts, while two houses of Hō-traders are Chinese style, flush with the ground; they are the only ones containing small stools,

One of the H5 has a Lawā-, the other one a Karēn-wife. People said one of the two was a Tād (Thai?); he called himself a Mong, allegedly derived from Mongol.

On the wide, irregular but proper village road of hardened loamy soil there was a cavity bristling with stakes to prevent the pigs' wallowing during the rainy season and deepening the hole more and more. At the water-place, 15 minutes below the village, only a trickle of turbid fluid was forthcoming. B.Gōg Luang is the only Lawā village where pigeons are kept, more than a dozen belonging to the headman Nāi Mueang Sāengjām who bought them at five baht apiece in Maelanoi.

Three generations ago, before the Principality of Chiangmai was definitely integrated into the Kingdom of Siam, the villagers of B.Pae' in the West, B.Khōng in the East and B.Gōg Nōi in the South came with their suits and complaints for decision to B.Gog Luang, the oldest of these four villages.

Bān Pae'

The houses are built on both sides of a broad and steep ridge reaching far downhill with their terraces towards the village road in the middle; there are house-sites located at other places also. The water-place is 10 minutes down in a gorge, the water dripping turbidly as in B.Gōg Luang.

Bān La'āng Nuea (Northern La'āng)

The village is built on a ridge; in front and behind are higher hills. The houses have their long sides along the road and their terraces facing generally towards the East.

Two families have moved in from B.Sām.

Bān La'āng Tāi (Southern La'āng)

This smallest Lawā village of only nine houses is situated down a slope. On the left side going down, just before the upper ritual house, is a sugar-cane garden.

Bān Dong

With 96 houses it is the biggest hill Lawā village (if we do not count the 139 houses of the widespread Umphāi group). Here is to be found quite a large school-building of the Border Patrol Police and the only

coconut-palm I have met with in the Lawā hills. Only in B.Pā Pāē, somewhat lower than the other Lawā villages, they have planted coconut and betel palms (Kunstadter 1970, 27).

Together with neighbouring B. La'ub, B. Dong is provisionally reckoned among the northern group, though these two show some traits of the southern one.

3. Lay-out of the villages

As might be grasped from some of the foregoing descriptions it would be exaggerated to give the Lawā villages in general the geographical term of street village (Strassendorf). Obayashi (1964, 201), writing of a tendency to this village pattern, had only seen B.Pā Pāē, B.La'ub and B.Ōmphāi Luang/B.Yāēg, and of these none but the latter could be thus called. With the houses of this double-village lining both sides of a ridge, a kind of village road comes quite naturally into being in the middle. B.Chāngmā Luang is built on an even wider ridge, and the result is a broad middle road. B.La'ub might be called a street village in its lower part, but at the eastern end the houses climb up a slope as best they can. There are several roads and paths crossing through B.Pā Pāē which could by no means be regarded as a street village; it is rather a clustered village (Haufendorf) as seen from the picture in Kunstadter (1966 B, 126/27).

Anyone looking for street villages in the northern group might point to the old part of B.Tūn laid out on a flat stretch with two rows of houses, although the new village south of it is spread down a weak inclination without much order. Furthermore, the long drawn out B.Gōg Luang and the two La'āng villages could conceivably be said to be a kind of street villages. On the other hand, B.Mūēd Lōng hung over by a mountain, B.Hō' filling its wide trough, and B.Pae' with its houses stepping down a steep ridge, have their individual forms emanating from the necessity to adapt to the topographical conditions of sites chosen in former times. Funke (1960, 141) says correctly: "The general lay-out of the villages is decided by the shape of the ridge on which they are situated. Umpai has the form of a long stretched street village."

But when he writes: "All the settlements are situated on the tops of steep hill cones" (1960, 141), then I cannot agree. The same also holds for Obayashi's remark (1964, 200) that the villages "are situated high up near hill tops". As described above no village is near a hill top. Some of them are situated on ridges—e.g., the Umphāi group (with the exception of B.Den and B.Chāngmō Nōi), the lower part of B.La'ub, B.Gōg Luang and the two La'āng villages. Possibly they settled down there quite a long time ago for "protection against attacks" (Rangsit 1945, 494); but there being no more danger from raiders, only a great disadvantage is left: water is very scarce. Other villages such as B.Sām, B.Mūēd Lōng, B.Hō', B.Pae' and B.Dong are surrounded by or wedged in between hills; B.Pā Pā even lies in the valley of a stream, so being the only Lawā village with ample water supply.

In conclusion there is no definite pattern in the lay-out of hill Lawā villages. Be it on ridges or in depressions and valleys, everywhere their form is determined by the variety of the terrain.

4. Demography

From the time of Holt S. Hallett's tour through northern Thailand (in those times and coming from Burma he called it the "Shan States") to this day it has not been possible to produce more than superficial estimates on the number of villages, houses and people of the Lawā. One author includes all so-called Lawā, of whom the majority have long been thai-ized; another confuses the Lawā in the Bō Luang group with the hill Lawā; while a third makes a guess only at the Lawā in Maesariang district (Changwat Maehongson), forgetting the five villages in Maejaem district (Changwat Chiangmai) which after all have 209 houses.

So let us take a closer look at these very varied conceptions: at Maesariang (the Burmese: Maing Loongyee), Hallett (1890, 36) "procured the names of 33 Lawa villages" which "contained on an average 42 houses". The Karēn villages had on an average only 20 houses; they always were much smaller than the Lawā villages. Hallett goes on (1890, 37): "I was assured that the average number of people living in a house was seven; but even allowing only five, there would be upwards of 13,000 people",

including also Karēn and North Thai. For the Lawā alone 33 villages with an average of 42 houses is equal to a total of 1386 houses and at five persons I come to a total of 6930 Lawa. The trouble is that one does not know if the B5 Luang group and the hill Lawā were included as Hallett speaks of the Lawā in the Khun Yuam basin. At any rate, it can be gathered from his notes that 80 years ago there were still more Lawā villages than nowadays and that some of them were situated more to the west, but now they are certainly all thai-ized.

Gordon Young (1961, 68, and on table p. 113) writes that "there are 43 known villages of Lawa which number some 1300 or more households, averaging about 30 houses per village, and 7.0 persons per house. The total population is estimated at 9,000 persons (this may be a low estimate). The largest village is Baw Luang, in which there are 230 households. Few Lawa villages number less than 25 houses."

As to B.B5 Luang, mentioned here only incidentally, Kerr (1924, 136) says: "There are seven Lawa villages on the Baw Lūang Plateau.... Of these seven villages Baw Lūang, with about 80 houses, is the largest; another fairly large village is Baw Sali." So from 1924 to 1961, within 37 years, this largest Lawā village has grown from 80 to 230 houses and in January 1969 it had, according to its headmaster Khun Suchāt, 312 houses (or, counting seven persons per house, 2184; counting only five, 1560 inhabitants).

Wenk (1959, 108) speaks of "the Lāwā of whom the bulk, perhaps 3000 people, lives nowadays in the hills west of Chiangmai between the Mae Ping and the Salwin", and Srisawasdi (1963, 169), restricting his estimate on the western part of the hills, says that "in Amphoe Maesariang alone about 3000 Lawa live sporadically scattered". Kunstadter's estimates go up to about 10,000 unassimilated Lawā in the mountains (1965, 1; 1966 B, 122, 125; 1966 C, 2; 1969, 232). As to the number of villages, he is less consistent, as once he notes "a group of 15 to 20 traditional mountain settlements" (1966 A, 62) and then "25 to 30 villages scattered in the mountains" (1966 B, 122).

Demographic reports on single villages are scarce. Only for B.Pā Pā do we have exact surveys by Kunstadter (1970, 2): 51 houses with 233 people, and of 1 July 1967 (1969 B, 1): 227 people in B.Pā Pā, and a total population in B.Pā Pā, B.La'ub and B.Dong of 1257 people.

Obayashi (1964, 199) gave for B.La'ub 85 houses, while in January 1969 we obtained 92 houses. It is possible that in the intervening years seven houses had been added; I myself observed some men leveling the ground with a harrow for a new house site on a slope in the upper village.

Of the Umphāi group, Obayashi (1964, 199) reported 160 houses. In 1964 our informants told us that all six villages together had 280 houses with 2500 people; this would come to 8.9 persons per house; certainly the figures given us were much too high. At the end of 1968 we learned that the Umphāi group had only 139 houses. If we assume a figure of seven persons per house (as Gordon Young does), there would be 973 people or, at five, only 695 people. I should say the latter number is nearer to the facts.

In B.Pā Pā, 233 people to 51 houses gives an average of only 4.56 persons per house; the village lost many people in an epidemic and a huge fire about 25 years ago (Kunstadter 1970, 2). Taking the 1967 figures, 227 people of B. Pā Pā subtracted from the total of 1257 results in 1030 people living in $92+96=188$ houses of B. La'ub and B. Dong; the average for these two villages would be 5.5 persons per house.

The headman of B.Pae' said that in his village of 60 houses there were 3-400 people; the average is 5-6.6 persons per house. This was the only instance where we obtained at least an approximate number of inhabitants of a village. Otherwise the headmen, though supposed to be obliged to list their people, never gave us the number of persons, only of houses.

According to our information there are 19 hill villages of the Lawā plus nine villages of the B5 Luang group, or 28 altogether (see Table 2). The hill villages had in January 1969 (after deduction of 32 Karēn and 2 H5 houses in B.H5' and B.Gōg Luang) 716 Lawā houses. The houses of the 17 families who emigrated after our tour from B.Tūn and the Chāngmō villages (see p. 244) are still included, the time of our survey being taken as a fix-point; some more houses might have been abandoned since we left. With 716 houses in 19 villages, there is an average of 37.7 houses per hill village.

The main question of course is how many Lawā people live in the hill villages. We might have obtained an exact number in the district offices of Maesariang, Maejaem and Maelanōi, but unfortunately we had no time to visit these places. So our only recourse was to decide what we considered the most likely number of inhabitants per house. While Young uses seven, from B.Pac' we got 5-6.6; and Kunstadter's figures from B.La'ub and B-Dong result in 5.5, from B.Pā Pāe in 4.56. Seven seems too high, five or six would be more adequate. Still, I want to note down here the figures for all possibilities:

At 7	persons per house of	716	houses:	5012	hill Lawā
" 6	"	"	"	4296	" "
" 5.5	"	"	"	3938	" "
" 5	"	"	"	3580	" "

From this it would appear that the hill Lawā are at the very most 5000 strong but that probably they do not count more than about 4000 or even somewhat less. Nearest to this estimate come Wenk and Srisawasdi with their 3000, while Kunstadter with 10,000 overestimated highly. Young, of whose 43 Lawā villages one should like to know the whereabouts, combines the Lawā in the hills with the partly thai-ized ones on the high plateau. As there are no figures for the Bō Luang group we cannot make a calculation. But a guess is allowed, and I should say that the grand total does not surpass 7000 who can still more or less be reckoned as Lawā.

C. Socio-religious ranks

1. Samang

Steinmann/Rangsit (1939, 173) were the first anthropologists to mention "chieftain families who descend from the Lawā prince Milankha of olden times" (footnote 1: "in which families the chieftainship is hereditary"). Hutchinson (1939, 179) speaks of "their aristocracy Khun" or "highly placed Lawā of earlier days". Khūn(ၵ၆) = lord, leader, is a Thai title. Instead of khūn the Lawā say *samang*, and this word appears for the first time in a somewhat unfamiliar form in Rev. J.S. Holladay's

legend of the beautiful S'mang Roh-eh who married a youth from the spirit world (Seidenfaden 1940, 34/35). "It is also said that the descendants of this woman never eat dog flesh, and that is the reason that the headman of each village and his family may be the only people in that village who do not eat dogs. The headman is invariably a descendant of S'mang Roh-eh.... It is also said that no one in the village of L'oop indulges in this particular delicacy." The compiler of "Lawa" in "Minority Groups in Thailand" (1970, 942) has recognized that a *samang* girl was spoken of, and indeed the *samang* families do not eat dog flesh and were said in B.Pae' to abhor also roe (barking deer — *īgēng*, อีเก้ง) "because the cut-off pieces of it resemble those of dogs". This rather far-fetched explanation is refuted, at least for B.Pā Pāe, by Kunstadter (1966 A, 7): "The big *samang*....receives a leg of any large wild game animal (deer, pig, etc.) which is shot."

Funke writes (1960, 142): "all the Lawa of the Umpai-group belong to one of two groups into which the population is divided: The 'Lua' or commoners and the 'Kun' or privileged ones. The special position of the Kun is concerned with all religious ceremonies." He adds (1960, 145): "Until the present time a dual system, not mentioned by earlier research-workers, has been preserved." Wenk (1959, 114, 2nd note 1): "Phai and Khun allegedly signify a sociological class division within the Lawa groups." He means what is in Central Thai *phrâi* and *khun* (ไพร่, ขุน), the commoners and *samangs*. That this division is not a mere allegation is shown by Obayashi (1964, 204), the first anthropologist to finally bring forth the word *samang*: "In La Ūb three hereditary status-ranks obtain: 1. *samang*, high priest, namely a representative of the royal family, descendants of a legendary Lawa king....; 2. *lam*, low priest....; 3. *lua*, ordinary people."

At a glance at these different statements we must remark that Steinmann/Rangsit's designation of "chieftains" for the *samang* is not valid for the peaceful Lawā of modern times, although for a much earlier period it might well have been; to this concept we shall come back later. They correctly mention their descent from the Lawā prince, often also called *khūn luang* or King Milangkha. Of this dynasty the headman of B5 Luang, Nāi Sau (นายสาร), in 1964, gave the following genealogy:

- Khūn Thu' (๓)
 „ Thuang (ทอง)
 „ Luang Wilangga' (หลวงวิลังกะ)=Milangkha
 These three were brothers
 „ Tha' (๓๕)
 „ Thōng (ทอง)
 „ A' lōng Pagwāēng (อะล่อง บักนาง)

Thereafter the royal line ended. It might have been 1000 years or more ago when the Mōn still reigned at Haripunjaya. "Such genealogies, obviously much abbreviated, are only seven to nine generations in length" (Kunstadter, 1965, 2).

The mythical descent of the *samangs* from the girl S'mang Roh-eh was told in La' ub, a village with its own traditions, but there is no known historical background. Holladay did not realize that his "hereditary headmen" were the *samangs* who must not by any means be headmen of villages. A headman (Lawā: *poegwad*) nowadays, be he *samang* or not, is a functionary of the Thai government, elected, it is true, by his fellow villagers, but who must be acknowledged by an administrative officer.

The idea of Funke that the Lawā have a "dual system" (Zweiklassensystem) seems rather strange. There are dual systems in Africa and New Guinea which are defined by Haekel (1950, 13/14) in this way: "The characteristic of a dual organization is the bisecting of a social or territorial unit, and in connection with this partition are the ideological and symbolical contrast pairs, with antagonisms also expressed in the name." There is nothing of this with the Lawā. They have a thin layer of what might be termed "aristocrats" over the mass of the population. Theirs is a very ancient feudal system.

Obayashi finally found even three social layers. Between the *samang* and the ordinary people he noted the *lām*. This was in B.La' ub and he also could have cited B.Pā Pāē; at the same time he stated that Umphāi had no *lām*. So the Lawā in general have only two classes or social layers; the *lām* as a third one in two exceptional cases will be treated later.

To know the essentials about the *samangs* and their functions we must consult Kunstadter: "In some Lua' villages, including Pa Pae, there

are lineages whose members are known as *samang*. The elder of this lineage is known as '*samang ga*' ("big samang"), or sometimes by his Thai title, *khun*. In some of the villages the samang lineages trace their descent back to Khun Luang Wilanka, or to one of his princes" (1965, 2). "The members of *samang* lineages in different villages consider themselves related for some purposes, but *samangs* from different villages can intermarry" (1966 A, 62).

Functions: It is "the general belief that the main function of the big *samangs* is to act as the guardians of Lua' culture, and they must be consulted when any major ceremony (except funerals) takes place, or whenever there is any question of interpretation of customary laws" (1965, 7/8). "The 'big *samang*' also is expected to make rulings which interpret tradition in situations not covered by specific customs and to direct major village ceremonies by indicating the order of events and the proper spirits to be propitiated" (1966 A, 68).

"Title in swidden land traditionally resides in the village as a whole, and is administered for the village by a religious official (*samang*) who inherits his position patrilineally" (1969 A, 234). "Violations of field boundaries are punished by ritual sanctions, which, in the event they are not obeyed, are enforced by the *samang*" (1966 C, 4). "The *samang* or chief priest of the village . . . has the responsibility for settling disputes between claimants to the same parcel of swidden land. The priests also have the responsibility of conducting ceremonies on behalf of the village which are designed to appease the spirits of the forests in which the swiddens are cut" (1970, 6). "The cycle of shifting cultivation begins in January with a search for cultivation sites . . . carried out by the older men . . . including the religious leaders" (1970, 8; 1966 C, 3). "The Lua' villagers depend on the wisdom and accumulated knowledge of the chief priest to decide the date for the burn . . . preceded and accompanied by a major communal ceremony conducted by the priests and elders, to placate the spirits and to insure that the fields will burn completely but not out of control" (1970, 9; also 1966 B, 139; 1966 C, 5). "At Pa Pae the chief priest must be the first to begin planting his field" (1970, 12; this paragraph condensed : 1966 A, 68; 1966 C, 5).

At the end of the Lua' year in December "he informs the bad spirits that they are going to be sent out of the village", then he leads the group which with much shouting and shooting will drive them out (1967, 6). "He is also charged with enforcing the incest taboo... by expelling the offending parties and driving out the bad spirits which result from incestuous unions" (1966 A, 68).

"*Samangs* are not allowed to take part in funeral ceremonies, nor go to the cemetery for fear that they will lose their ritual knowledge. They are, however, obliged to pay a fine to the bereaved family for their failure to help in the funeral celebration" (1965, 8; 1966 B, 126). This rigid prohibition to the *samang* entails that there must be somebody else to conduct the death-rites; of this man I will speak in a later section.

Privileges: In return for his services the big *samang* "is given the first choice of fields in the upland area" (1966 C, 3; 1970, 6). "The ordinary villagers symbolize their loyalty to their *samang* leader by yielding to him the seat of highest honor whenever he enters a house" (1966 A, 65). "A person who owes allegiance to the big *samang* must give him the leg of the pig which is sacrificed at each family's upland field before it is planted, and a special share of the animal sacrificed at the last ceremony of the year. The big *samang* also receives a leg of any large wild game animal (deer, pig, etc.) which is shot, and the saddle of any pig which has been killed because it is believed to be inhabited by a bad spirit. The big *samang* also receives a customary payment of one rupee and a chicken from the groom, after a wedding has taken place" (1965, 7; 1966 A, 65, 69; 1966 C, 3; 1970, 35).

In Omphai Luang the highest *samang* was said to receive the head of any buffalo or bull killed at a great village sacrifice. The skull and the jaw would then be deposited on a shelf in the ritual house (Steinmann/Rangsit 1939, 168). In fact, we have never seen such a skull; in the ritual house of B. Yāēg and in one of the three ritual houses of B. La' ub there was just an old jaw-bone on a shelf. This extreme scarcity of skulls apparently stems from the fact that big feasts are very rare; e.g. in B.Pae' the headman Mueang Pung, a *samang ra'* (Rangsit, 1942/45, 705: *ra*=big), has seen big buffalo sacrifices only twice in his life-time, and the 50-years old informant, Nāi Dōng Pū Pūg, only once (*pū* is a deferential address).

Kunstadter has demonstrated for the *samangs* of B.Pā Pāc the important role they play in that village. Still there are differing opinions, as Don Schlatter, a well-known missionary in Maesariang communicated on 8. 10. 63. to Obayashi (1964, 212, note 17): "Although they do have a few special privileges they are usually not the rulers of the village nor do they necessarily control the worship". Indeed, they are in no way "rulers", but as far as I could myself discover, Schlatter might be right insofar as the *samangs* do not lead worship in every case; still I must make the reservation that I have never had the chance of observing a communal sacrifice. As a matter of fact, it was only on my second visit to the Umphāi group that I became aware of this class of men, though at the first visit my main informant was Lung Gao (Thai: lung, ṛṇ=uncle, also address for older men), a *samang* and former headman. This fine old man I shall mention again in the section on death-rites.

The *samangs* do not differ in terms of dress or special regalia from the ordinary villagers; they are quite unobtrusive and unostentatious and are simple hard-working hill peasants like the rest of the people. Their manners are modest and friendly, never haughty or arrogant. Nor can one recognize a *samang* by the fact that he has a grander house; quite in contrast to the givers of the big 'feasts of merit' of the Naga in Assam (India) who according to the rank attained show distinguishing marks on both their clothes and their houses.

Obayashi (1964, Fig. 7) thought a carved piece of wood about 15 cm wide in the gable-field of a *samang* house in B.Ṣmphāi Luang could be interpreted as a model of buffalo-horns and thus be a sign of *samang*-rank. If one looks closer, this little piece of wood does not in fact resemble buffalo-horns, it has rather a bird-like form. Apart from this, the small pieces of wood which can be seen in many houses in the shape of flowers, stars, crescents or even only an ordinary knob (as in B.Hṇ'), have nothing to do with the status of a *samang*; they simply serve to prevent the triangular partition-wall, woven bamboo-laths, from falling off the gable. The different carvings are purely decorative (Fig. 1).

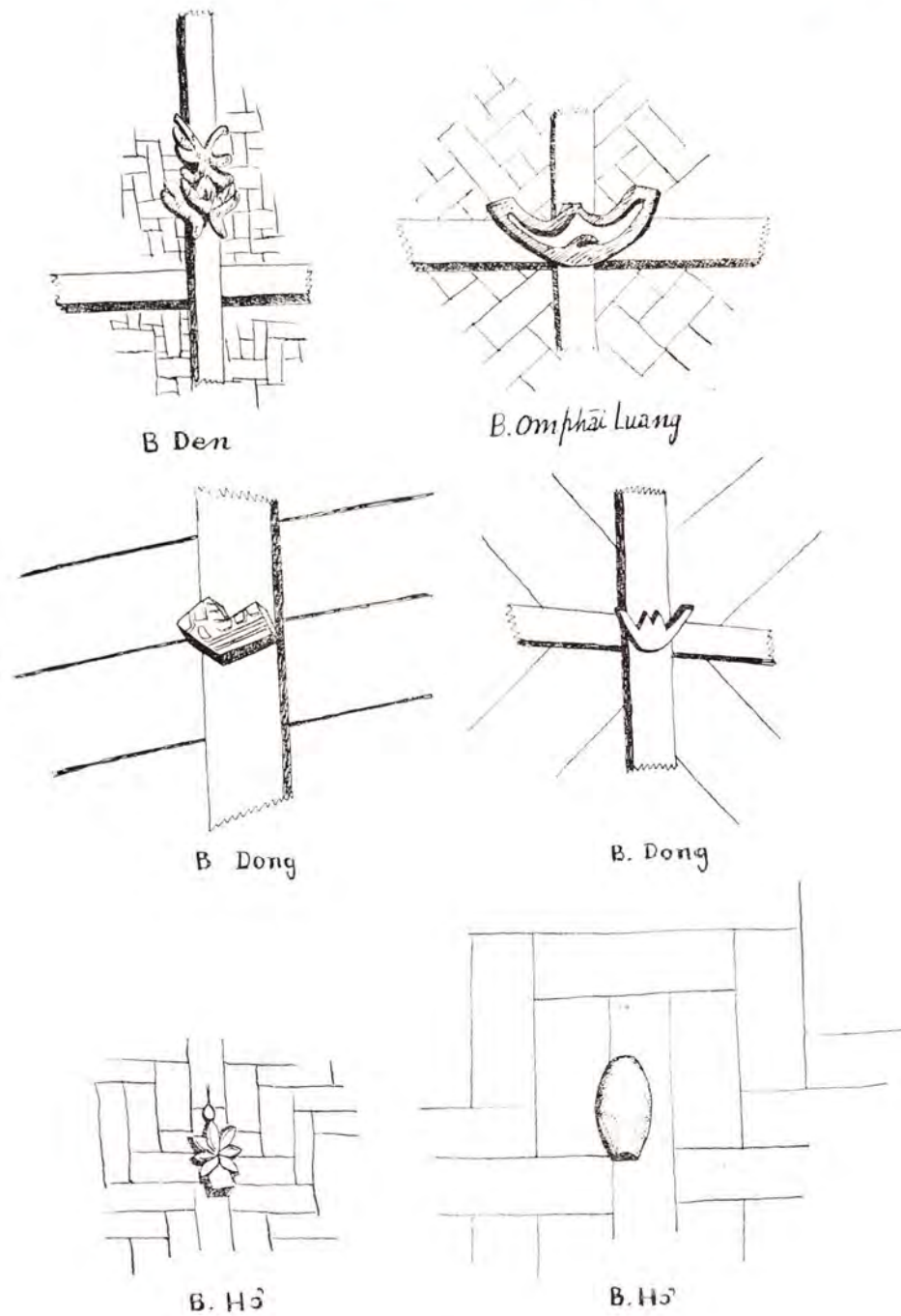


Fig. 1

Six of the many different carvings on the gable front.
(Drawings by 'Shudhi' Chatterjee, Calcutta, from photographs of the author.)

Similarly, the carved gable-horns are not signs of a *samang* house. If there is a carver at hand everybody can have them made, a pair at the price of 10.—Baht in the Umphāi group, B.Sām, and B.Dong (in B.B5 Luang, 20.—Baht). I was also told that only *samang* villages are allowed to put up the high, double sacrificial posts on the village square, which are carved on the upper part, the so-called *sagang la'*. This cannot be correct because in the three Chāngmō villages, in B.Tūn and B.Dong there are carved *sagang* posts, and in these villages there are no *samang*. In the north they have only a single *sagang*; three villages, one with and two without *samang*, have no *sagang* at all. In conclusion there is nothing to distinguish a *samang* during his lifetime, only the *nām* post erected after his death is an essential expression of his dignity.

Kunstadter (1966 C,3) has made an important statement: "Many, but not all, Lawa communities have...*samang*". On Table 3, I have noted

TABLE 3
Samang

Villages with <i>samang</i>	Villages without <i>samang</i>
B. Den: except three families of commoners, living down the village outside the <i>samang</i> section, all others are <i>samang</i> : 21 families.	B. Chāngmō Manōd
B. Yāēg: one <i>samang</i> family, 10 commoner families.	B. „ Nōi
B. Omphāi Luang: the <i>samang</i> own a special section in the village with 11 families; only 6 are commoners.	B. „ Luang
B. Pā Pāē: 3 <i>samang</i> and 4 lām families, the rest of 44 are commoners.	B. Tūn
B. Mūēd Lōng: except 5 or 6 families all are <i>samang</i>	B. Sām
B. Gōg Nōi	B. Hō'
B. Pae'	B. Khōng
B. La'āng Tāi: one <i>samang</i> family.	B. Gōg Luang: there lived one <i>samang</i> family 4 or 5 generations ago.
B. La'ub: 10 <i>samang</i> and 8 lām families, the other 74 are all commoners.	B. La'āng Nuea: there have formerly been <i>samang</i> .
	B. Dong

TABLE 4
Specification for the Umphāi group

	Houses	<i>samang</i> families	commoners
B. Yāēg :	11	1	10
B. Ōmphāi Luang :	17	11	6
In the double village			
on the ridge :	28	12	16
B. Den	24	21	3
In the three main			
Umphāi villages	52	33	19

the nine villages where there are still *samang* and the ten villages where there are none. Two of these villages, B.Gōg Luang and B.La'āng Nuea once had *samang*; in the latter village they said that for their dead they now put up only *mbueang*, and no more *nām* posts intended exclusively for *samangs*. But some old *nām* posts are still standing near the burial ground. (For these memorial posts to be treated more extensively later under "Death rites", cf. Kauffmann 1971, 131 with note 2.)

I think that in the olden times every village had its *samang*. Kunstadter (1965, 7) mentions that "in the past each of the three founding villages of Pa Pae – Mo Pae, Mo Hong, and Mo Pan – had its own *samang* lineage. Sometime before the three villages came together, the *samang* lineage of Mo Hong died out. This was felt to be a disaster", as a Lawā village could not exist without the religious leadership of a big *samang*. According to Kunstadter (1969 A, 234) "if the lineage dies out, villagers may request a member of a related 'princely' lineage from another village to assume the office – a procedure which is considered completely legitimate." So Mo Hong "begged the big *samang* of Mo Pae to give them his son.... The big *samang* of Mo Pae let his son go, but then the old man died without heirs, and the Mo Pae villagers... in turn begged for a *samang* from Mo Hong, but the man they got did not know the proper ceremonies, so they sent him back, and have done without a big *samang* ever since." (1965, 8). Another story of

Kunstadter's is about the big *samangs* of Mo Hong and Mo Pan quarrelling whereupon the big *samang* of Mo Pan "ran off to La-up" where they "welcomed him and installed him as their big *samang*, since they did not have one at that time" (1965, 8/9).

As a consequence two constituent villages of B.Pā Pāe had to dispense with big *samangs*, while a village without one, La'ub, got a new big *samang*. There is still one more village which must have had a *samang*: Chāngmō Nōi. "Perhaps 120 years ago" the big *samang* of Mo Hong was entitled to a fine from the big *samang* of yuang gong (B.Chāngmō Nōi) who having no money sent some of his relatives instead. In B.Pā Pāe "14 houses of their descendants live today in one section of the village... They continue to worship certain spirits in a distinct way, despite the fact that they have intermarried with other Pa Pae residents for at least four or five generations" (Kunstadter, 1965, 4). It would be about 100-130 years ago that B.Chāngmō Nōi still had a big *samang*. Later Kunstadter reduced the space of time to 80 years (1966 A, 66), but be that as it may it seems certain that in the past century this village still had *samangs* who have now disappeared.

While other villages have only one big *samang*, B.Pā Pāe is an exception caused by its partition into two parts by the Māe Amlang, and both sections have their own big *samang*. The ceremony of chasing away bad spirits must be performed simultaneously on each side "for fear that a *samang* from the other side... would merely chase the spirits across the stream and into the side of the village where he did not live" (1967,5; 1965,9).

The statement that villages can do without a big *samang* is inconsistent with Kunstadter's repeatedly uttered assertion that the Lawā feel "if we didn't have a *samang*, we would have to live like apes and monkeys in the jungle" (1966 B, 126; 1965, 7). As Table 3 shows many villages can do very well without a *samang*, but of course, they must have somebody who directs them, and this is the *tonhīd* or *jāungāu* of whom we shall speak in a short while. Still, the question lingers why villages without *samang* did not call in a member of a related 'princely' lineage, a possibility indicated by Kunstadter. One must assume that different ceremonial rules often prevented this.

From Table 4 is to be gathered that in the three southern Umphāi villages with 33 *samang* families the largest number of *samangs* is living within a narrow small area. So it can be understood why the Umphāi group could exert such a strong power over other Lawā villages (see p. 249). The biggest single *samang* village is B.Den with 21 *samang* against only 3 commoner families. But B.Ōmphāi Luang, which gave the whole group its name, carries most weight. Its *samangs* originally had their own quarter from the ritual house up to the northwest end of the village. Their houses must be placed higher than those of commoners, and their ceremonies are strictly separated from those of the ordinary Lawā (informant: Khun Suchāt). The *samangs* gave commoners the permission to live with them. After the death of a big *samang* his son takes over; if there is none, someone of the same lineage does so. In the three southern *samang* villages there are only 52 houses against 87 in the three Chāngmō villages; but these are only the "twigs of the tree".

In B.Gōg Luang which for four or five generations has had no *samang*, they told the following story :

A long time ago, when a *samang* was chief of the village, all people agreed and said: "We want to clear this slope for a new field." Then the *samang* went all by himself to the chosen area and called the *nog phī ra'* or forest spirit to ask if the place was good and to let him know in a dream. On this he lay down to sleep on the spot. If the dream was good on the day after next people started felling trees; if it was bad the *samang* said: "Sacrifice to him a pig or chicken."

When the *samang* was dying without children he told the people: "Now, there will be no more *samang* with you. I advise you always to sacrifice a pregnant sow. Then, if I am reborn among you I certainly will have children also."

In B.Pae' they said :

Many generations ago the *samang* split into two groups because some of them did not observe the *samang* rules and set up new ones. They became low *samangs* (*samang thīam*, Rangsit 1942/45, 705 : *thīam* = low) in contrast to the original higher *samang* (*samang roid*). They

are not allowed to intermarry. It is forbidden for people of these two groups to have sexual relations and such an offense must be expiated by each of the culprits paying a fine of 12 Rupees (=120.— Baht), 2 chicken, 2 bottles of rice-alcohol to the headman; if a baby is born from such a union, the man must pay 42 Rs. (=420 Bht.) the girl 12 Rs. (=120 Bht.). The headman said that for generations nothing of the kind has happened.

This story of high and low samangs might seem a bit strange, even doubtful, if in B.Omphāi Luang they did not maintain that they also have two layers of *samang*, a high and a low one. The son of a high *samang* will be a high *samang*, and, of course, the big *samang* will come out of a high *samang* family. Maybe Kunstadter's remark (1965,9) that "male patrilineal relatives of the big *samang* are called little *samang*" who have no special privileges, indicates an equivalent for B.Pā Pāē. Unfortunately, we had no opportunity to penetrate more deeply into these intriguing questions.

As an introduction to *samang* marriage I am citing Kunstadter (1966 A, 73): "Leadership in the lineage, and even position in the *samang* lineage, can be acquired by virtue of a matrilocal marriage—or more precisely by a marriage in which the husband moves into the house of his bride's father or late husband. The matrilocal husband must abandon his own ancestor spirits and honor the spirits of the household into which he has moved."

In villages where there are *samangs* these may intermarry with ordinary Lawā:

1. A *samang* man marries a commoner girl: the man stays *samang*,
the girl becomes *samang* herself.

In this case the *samang* husband cannot live in the house of his commoner father-in-law, thence a matrilocal marriage is not possible.

2. A *samang* girl marries a commoner man:

a) The girl loses her *samang* status if she moves into his house (patrilocal marriage) and he must pay the double marriage price (also: Kunstadter, 1965, 9).

b) However, when her husband goes to live in her *samang* father's house (matrilocal marriage) he will not be *samang* but he must follow *samang* rules and customs, give up his former surname to take on that of his father-in-law's *samang* name (without being one) and, more important than anything else, he must forsake the worship of the ancestor spirits of his former patrilineal family and sacrifice from now on to the *samang* ancestor spirits. On the other hand he has a great advantage in that he need not pay any marriage price; people said: "The wife buys him, as it were".

Nāi Lū of B.Yāeg, a commoner and a cunning old fox, acted in this way. He married into a *samang* house in B.Ōmphāi Luang and is now the *gorīd* of the commoners in B.Yāeg.

Nāi Kham Sug, a commoner from B.Yāeg married the widow of a *samang* from B.Ōmphāi Luang. She was originally an ordinary Lawā, being a *samang* only by name. After her first husband's death she went back to her home-village B. Chāngmō Nōi. At that time Nāi Kham Sug was a quite well-to-do owner of wulfram-mines, but he was cheated out of these by a Thai. Nāi Kham Sug went to him and shot him and his son dead; the wife was luckily not in or he would have wiped out the whole family. For this savage deed he spent five years in Maesariang prison.

Nāi Kham Sug married his wife for love. She came to live in his house and of course lost her *samang* status. He had to pay the double bride price: 13 Rs. (=130 Bht.) and 10 big hooked silver-money pieces (=1000 Bht.), for their form popularly known in Thai as *hī mā* (หีหมา—bitch's genitals. Srisawasdi, 1963, 180, 183). He was obliged to kill one buffalo (then worth 400.— Bht., nowadays at least 1000.— Bht.), and one big pig. Furthermore he had to give to his wife's relatives two chicken and a bottle of rice-alcohol each (about 10-20 chicken and 5-10 bottles), altogether he valued his payments at over 3000.— Baht.

Other interesting facts related to the *samangs* are as follows: In B.Pae' they maintained that the *samang* in all villages must offer one (or more) fish at every sacrifice. Kunstadter (1965, 43) mentions that the Chāngmō Nōi families living in B.Pā Pāe with their own *samang* "share a small meal of steamed fish" after a spirit sacrifice ending the

agricultural ritual. It is perhaps for this connection with the *samang*, as B.Pae' informants insinuated, that at the bottom of the sheaths of the silver-daggers produced there is always a fish engraved. On the other hand everybody may buy such a dagger, and after our visit several of our men wore them proudly at their belts.

With this I must destroy the dearly held and ubiquitous myth of B.La'ub being "the only silversmith-village". In B.Pae' there are three specialists but nearly every man can work silver. Rāng Pū Gam told us that Lawā silversmiths were originally in B.La'āng Nuea, but the last craftsman there had died. B.La'ub learnt there and B.Pae' in turn from B.La'ub. Still, at the very beginning, he said, the Lawā learnt this art from the Khamu'. The headman Phud Tānon of B.Khōng is a silversmith who has not practiced for years. However, if asked, he would still be able to do some work. Generally in the northern villages silver-work from B. Pae' is judged to be better than that of B.La'ub.

Another question relating to the *samangs* has already been referred to in connection with the erection of *nām* stone memorials, namely their more recent replacement by high wooden posts called *nām* (Kauffmann, 1971, 138). *Nām* posts for dead *samang* are put up in the four southern *samang* villages, but they are also known in some northern ones: in B.Sām (though there are no *samangs* when a buffalo is sacrificed at death), in B.Mūēd Lōng, and formerly in B.Gōg Luang and B.La'āng Nuea. B.Gōg Nōi, B.Hō', and B.Khōng have neither *nām* nor *mbueang*; at B.Gōg Luang a small, uncarved so-called *nām* is put up at the grave-end; of B.Pae' reference is lacking; B.La'āng Nuea, B.La'āng Tāi and even the *samang* village B.La'ub have no *nām* and to have only a *mbueang* erected in these three villages a buffalo must be sacrificed.

About these wooden *nām* posts there was a great enigma. Obayashi (1966, 257), who is an excellent observer, found "that on that post at a distance of 30 cm above and below two thin wooden sticks were stuck in horizontally. Two more similar sticks go out in a direction of 90° to the afore-mentioned ones, so that a total of four sticks are fixed to the wooden post".⁴ He then relies on Steinmann/Rangsit (1939, 172/73)

4) Translation from Japanese to German then to English might have slightly altered this citation,

and promptly takes over their confusion of *nām* and *mbueang*. On my first visit to the *nām* posts near B.Den there were no sticks protruding; they must have fallen down from the posts; only on my second visit did I see some of them. The Lawā then said: "The *samang* revolted against Khun Luang Wilangka together with his younger brother, and the sticks inserted into the sides of the *nām* posts are the spears they threw upon him."

On my third visit—just by accident, as the whole structure is very frail—I found the following remarkable feature of the *nām*, which has never been accurately recorded namely that (Fig. 2): there are indeed

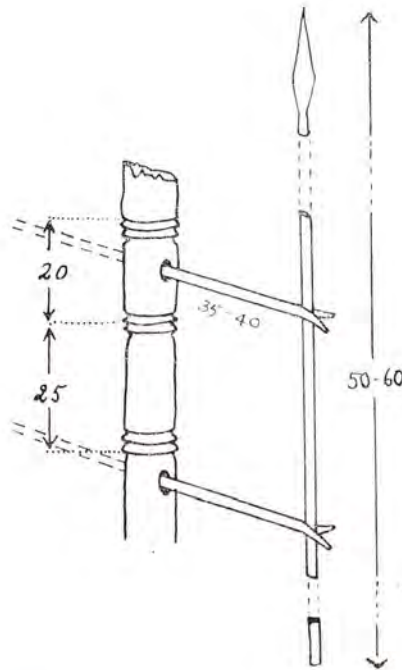


Fig. 2

Schematic graph of a *nām* post near B.Den.

(Drawing by Wolfgang Meyn, Munich, from a photograph of the author.)

on its right and left side two sticks each, 30-40 cm long and at a distance in height of 45-50 cm. Two of the four sticks are not at an angle of 90°, but of 180°. Their ends are cleft and on either side a thin spear,

50-60 cm long, with iron or tin spearhead and spearshoe is squeezed into the clefts. This time the Lawā said: "These spears serve the spirits of the *samang* to fight in the other world the spirits of the 'Red Karen' with whom the ancestors had been warring a long time ago." They could not specify, but Kunstadter (1965, 3; 1966 A, 65, note 8) explains that, according to his informants, about 150 years ago the three original constituent villages of B.Pā Pāe united for fear of bands of robbers from Burma. Their identity is not remembered "but they may have been B'ghwe Karen (Karenni, i.e. Kayah)", just: Red Karēn. This statement is confirmed by Hallett (1890, 30): "The 'muang'.... called Maing Loongyee by the Burmese, and Muang Nium by the Shans⁵ is traversed by war paths leading from Burma to Zimmé⁶ and Siam...; it was... subject to frequent inroads of man-stealers from Karenni, an independent State, which borders the muang on the northwest. Dr. Richardson, who visited Maing Loongyee in 1829... found it nearly deserted." This was about the time the B.Pā Pāe constituent villages consolidated, and it must have been a fearful time for the Lawā. Hallett (1890, 31) goes on: "When Dr. Cushing passed through the 'muang' in 1870, the Burmese Shans..., and Karennis had recommenced their raids into the country.... These hostilities, lasting nine or ten years, had ceased four years previous to my visit" (about 1884). So after the raids of the 1820's, again in the years from 1870 to 1880 the Karennis carried their murderous attacks to the cis-Mae Yuam country. Though I am not aware of any literature on the history of the Kayah (Karenni or Red Karēn, Thai: Yāng dāeng, ยางแดง), I believe that these reports are founded on facts, especially as there still are descendants of Red Karēns living mixed up with Lawā in B. Bō Luang; they have the family names of Mōng (Maung) Nān (หม่องน่าน) and Mōng Tia' (หม่องเตี้ย) from their great-grandfathers. One of our porters was called Nān Peng Mōng Nān (หนานเป่งหม่องน่าน).⁷

If we take these statements into account then the spears on the *nām* posts presumably are not such an old invention as could have been assumed from the first story of the B.Den people.

5) today: Mueang Maesariang

6) today: Chiangmai

7) On the banditry of the Kayah (Red Karēn) in the 19th century cf. p. 233/34 in: Charles F. Keyes, "New evidence on northern Thai frontier history" *In memoriam Phya Anuman Rajadhon*, The Siam Society 1970, 221-250.

At any rate, it is highly significant that only young men, able to carry arms and to fight, are allowed to cut and carve the *nām* posts, and that old men never perform this activity. This means of course that the *samang* are regarded as warriors, which would accord with the fact that in ancient times all royal leaders, be they Mōn or Thai or Lawā, were champions of their people not only as absolute reigning kings but more so as heroes at the forefront of the battle-line. Seidenfaden (1921, 46) remarks that the ancient Lawā "set up a dynasty in Chieng Sēn (A.D. 1057). One of the rulers of this dynasty was a famous Khun Chüang, a mighty warrior who extended his sway to Luang Prabang and the border of Annam, and his praise is still sung by local bards in the middle Mekhong valley. But not many generations after, the Lawā were entirely subjugated by the vigorous Thai streaming down from Yunnan's plains and hills." He adds (1921, 47): "The Lawā of the 11th and 12th centuries were—at least in Northern Siam—not an entirely barbarous people; they showed a warlike spirit and possessed also some social organization." My idea is that the *samang*, then still recognized princes of royal blood, after the defeat at the hands of the Mōn army of Haripunjaya (Lamphun), when their people were scattered in all directions, were the military, religious and custom-preserving leaders of small groups. Of these, after a long period of wandering and hardship, some finally settled down in the hills where they are still living today.

Not quite in accordance with this fighting spirit of the original *samang*, which I have suggested, are the following expositions:

Obayashi (1964, 212, note 17) and Kunstadter (1966 A, 68, note 12) compare the big *samang* of the Lawā to the *xəmiā* (pronounced choemiā) of the Lamet in Laos. Are these two words related in some way? I do not dare to venture into their etymology. At any rate, Izikowitz (1951, 112/13) describes the *xəmiā* as "priest of sacrifice", of whom there is only one in each village. "His office is hereditary in the male line. If he has no sons, his office goes over to one of his nephews on his brother's side". He must "perform all the sacrifices made to the different spirits of the village", and also see to order, "so that the village spirits are not disturbed". He decides which days are propitious for sacrifices, and "he must always be consulted first in everything that takes place within....

the village". Especially "when new houses are to be built... or when a new village is to be founded, it is the priest of sacrifice who officiates as 'building committee'." It might be that in this there is a trace of the 'village founder' who plays a role in the megalithic complex (Steinmann/Rangsit, 1939, 165; Kauffmann 1971, 141), though elsewhere there are no known megalithic traits in Lamet culture. Whatever the case may be, it seems to me that the *samang* and the *xəmiā* of these linguistically and also culturally related peoples have developed along very similar lines.

2. Lām

The most detailed evidence again comes from Kunstadter (1965, 9/10; 1966 C, 2/3):

"Six groups within the population of Ban Pa Pae... have maintained their identity as descent groups...: the *samangs*, and the descendants of settlers from the villages of Mo Pae, Mo Hong, Mo Pan, Chang Maw, and La-up. The first four village groups are each supposed to have a religious leader, known as a *lam*, who has an assistant. The *lam* is the oldest man born into his village group, and his assistant, who will succeed him at his death, is the next oldest man from that village group. *Lams* should be present for all important ceremonies (the communal agricultural rites, weddings, house-building, funerals), but it is not necessary that any particular *lam* preside at any particular ritual—the ceremonies for a Mo Hong man's house may be supervised by the *lam* from Mo Pae or Chang Maw, for example.

At the present time the office of *lam* for the Mo Pan group is vacant, because the incumbent has been converted to Christianity. He still participates in ceremonies to the extent of singing traditional songs, and sharing in the sacrificial meal and rice liquor, but he no longer conducts sacrifices or appeals to spirits. The second oldest man.... who should be the *lam* of Mo Pan, has made a matrilocal marriage to a Mo Hong woman (thereby becoming a member of Mo Hong), and is therefore ineligible to be a *lam*."

He adds (1966 C, 3): "The *lams* of the land-owning constituent villages also have first choice of land in the swidden area after the *samang*... has taken his choice... Members of constituent villages which

do not have land must pay a small fee (one bottle of rice liquor) to the *lam* of the land-owning constituent for the privilege of cultivating there." Finally Kunstadter (1966 A, 70) states: "*Lam* receive a special portion (usually a section of the head) of water buffaloes which are sacrificed for some of the communal agricultural ceremonies. They also are assigned a seat of honor when visiting a house."

From all this we can see that the *lāms* in B.Pā Pāē are the oldest men and the religious leaders of their original constituent village, and that their successors are the next oldest men. So it is age here, not blood, that makes a *lām*. I cannot find anything in Kunstadter's text that would indicate a hereditary position of the *lāms*, while Obayashi (1964, 204) has affirmed: "In La Ub three hereditary status-ranks obtain", of which the second one are the *lāms*. Of this village he also says that "the *samang* and *lam* play a leading part in ... animal sacrifices" (1964, 205); this is in accordance with Kunstadter's statements for B.Pā Pāē.

Now two questions arise: 1) Are the *lāms* hereditary and a second rank between the *samangs* and the commoners, and 2) What are their religious functions?

The idea of *lām* becomes quite controversial if we look at other villages, where we asked for them all along our way. In B.La'ub the *lāms* were said to be originally, i.e. since Khun Luang Wilangka's times, the assistants (one informant in B.La'ub even called them serfs) of the *samangs*. When the big *samang* wants to offer a bull for the village, he sends out *lāms* to announce the day of the sacrifice and to collect money (e.g. one *thāeb*=1 Rs.=10 Bht.) from every house which the *lāms* will deliver to the *samang*. This old office of *lām* was said "to stay in the family," so it would be hereditary (cf. B.B5 Luang below).

On the other hand in B.La'ub there are three headman-assistants (Thai: *phū chuai*, ผู้ช่วย = "helping men") who are also called *lām*, and everywhere in the northern villages where they speak of *lām* they designate by this word the *phū chuai*. These *lāms* being simple Lawā of no rank, in B.La'ub they doubted that even in B.Pā Pāē real *lām* of the above description are to be found. Indeed, the *lāms* in B.Pā Pāē have hardly much to do with the ancient office of the *samang*'s announcer or

herald; they became prominent elders when the constituent villages united.

In B.Omphāi Luang, the leading *samang* village, there are no *lāms* (also: Obayashi 1964, 204), and even the headman-assistants are not called so. Under the headmanship of Nāi Ping Chumphut, residing in B.Yāēg, every section of the Umphāi-group now has a *gāē bān* (แก่บ้าน = village elder) with responsibilities in his own right; he is assisted by a *phū chuai*.

In B.Sām there is no *lām*. In B.La'āng Nuea a *lām* is the same as a *phū chuai*; he is chosen by the headman and, as the *phū chuai* everywhere, does not receive remuneration, only being exempt from paying taxes. The *lām*'s name in this village is Nāi Singh Aikhun (นายสิงห์ อ้ายขุน). In B. Dong there are four *phū chuai*, occasionally also called *lām*.

Quite interesting is the case in B. Bō Luang: Khūn A'lōngpagwāēng is a real *lām*. The title Khūn was certainly bestowed on him by King Rama V or VI, so it is quite modern. In B.Bō Luang they call him Khūn A'lōngpagwāēng phū pra'gād (ขุนอะลองปักนางผู้ประกาศ), i.e. the 'announcer' (cf. also Srisawasdi 1963, 161: The ancestor of this lineage has become an ore-mine spirit). Khun Kraisi Nimmanahaeminda (1965, II, 235, 236) translates *lām* as herald.

The above two questions have not been resolved to our satisfaction. Apparently there was originally a third hereditary social stratum between the *samangs* and the commoners, which was concerned with certain religious activities. A former division into three classes seems to be confirmed in the translation given by Nimmanahaeminda (1965, II, 236) of the Bō Luang thā (๓=silver-plate grant). The chief mentioned in it was appointed by the Prince of Chiangmai, just as nowadays a Chief of the Sgō-Karēn is residing in B.Hōng (บ. หอง). The Prince of Chiangmai who accorded the grants about the middle of the 19th century ordered: "The Chief . . . will render his judgment according to law. Let the leaders behave as leaders should behave. Let the *lam* (herald) behave as the *lam* should behave. Let the common people behave as the common people should behave." If we read *samang* for 'leaders' we come to what nowadays is only traceable to B.Pā Pāē and B.La' ub (cf. Table 3: only in these two villages are *lām* families still living), while in the northern villages a

lām is nothing more than a chosen headman-assistant. We might find the reason for this in the earlier mentioned decline of Lawā culture in the north.

In short notes, Obayashi (1964, 212, note 18) and Kunstadter (1966 A, 70, note 15) have already referred to the frequent occurrence of the word *lam* (*lem*) in neighbouring regions. I give here all the instances in the literature I could find:

Izikowitz (1951, 16) writes of the Lamet: "A very important group of men in a position of great power, are the richest men of the village, the so-called *lem*, that is, the owners of a number of bronze drums and buffalos. This group of men can almost be considered as a sort of 'nobility', in spite of the fact that the *lem* status is not necessarily hereditary. A man who has become rich enough can be classed as *lem*." They also have some minor privileges, but, as Kunstadter already remarked, for the *lam* in B. Pā Pāe there is no wealth requirement. Though the Pā Pāe *lām* and the Lamet *lem* seem to be quite different, still it cannot be overlooked that both peoples have two classes with rather similar sounding names and, in the case of *samang* and *chamiā*, with a certain resemblance of functions.

Deydier (Paris 1954, 88/89) has written of the village U Nuea in northernmost Laos: A *lam* "is a kind of hill fief given to a notable Tai Lue by the lord. It serves as an intermediary between the people of his fief and the local administration". Naturally he will get many profits from this, but he also "must protect the people of his '*lam*', and when they come down to the valley, they go directly to the *Phō lām* (father of the *lām*) to be fed and housed".

Among the White Tai of Lai Chau in Upper Tongking a minor sorcerer, the *M̄ Lām*, knows the ritual songs, and when a buffalo is sacrificed for a dead man, "the *M̄ Lām* tells the history of the past generations" (1954, 206).

Finally here is a short extract of the extensive rites of the Lao described by me (Kauffmann, 1968, 300), based on the research of Charles Archaimbault⁸: at ceremonies in honour of the tutelary spirits of the

8) My best thanks are due to M. Charles Archaimbault of the École Française d'Extrême Orient in Bangkok, member of the Siam Society, who has kindly given me the full text of these ceremonies.

village B.Koeun near Turakom, 80 km north of Wiengjan (Vientiane), women, so-called media, are interposing between spirits and men. "The four media of low rank, who are considered to be the secretaries (*lam*) of the great spirits" perform the rites.

There we have the *lam* as secretaries, a concept perhaps not so far from 'announcer' or 'herald'. If we look over the various and partly very different meanings of *lam* (or *lem*) in an area comprising Laos and northern Thailand we cannot but suppose that there must be some relation between them. Perhaps we might conceive of them as mediating between higher positioned powers and the ordinary people.

3. Tonhīd

Steinmann/Rangsit (1939, 167) said: When the sacrificial buffalo for the powerful village spirit Pi-Sapait is tethered to the *sagang* post, "the village elder implores the spirit to accept the offering... As the Lawa do not have real shamans or medicine-men, it is the village elder who performs the conjuration". To the contrary, Funke (1960, 142) remarked: "The cognizance of the sacrificial sermons to be uttered at the ritual immolation of animals is part of the village sorcerer's knowledge who also hands down the legends of descent of the Umpai Lawa."

Steinmann/Rangsit, who by 'village elder' certainly understood the *samang*, are only right insofar as the Lawā have no shamans. The sole known exception, told by Khun Suchāt, is a woman in B.B5 Luang, Nāng Bau Phuangmālai (นางบัว พวงมาลัย). She is a witch-doctor who falls into a trance and then speaks with the voice of the spirit in question. Kunstadter (1965, 46) also relates of spirit doctors in La'ub whose practices seem very shaman-like: "such men are able to diagnose illnesses... by leaving their bodies and talking with the spirits". Then he remarks (1965, 47): "There is no one at Pa Pac who is considered to be a medical specialist (*mā phī*) although there are three men with big reputations as curers at La-up, and many Karen doctors in various nearby villages. Among the Lua' such specialists should be neither *samangs* nor *lams*." (See photograph of Karēn doctors practising in B. Pā Pāe in Kunstadter 1966 B, 152). These men should be given a fee of two baskets, one bundle of thread, one bottle of rice liquor, one liter of husked rice and 10-20 Baht. If successful, the patient honours the doctor with a head-

washing ceremony=*dam hŭa*. Apart from B.Pā Pāe I think that probably in all villages there is a man we could call medicine-man or sorcerer or spirit-doctor (Thai: *mō phī*, หมอผี).

This is also confirmed by Obayashi (1964 B, point 3 of his typed MS.) who describes an act of healing by sorcery in B.La'ub: "The river spirit can cause muscle aches. I saw a woman sitting in a porch who suffered pains in the shoulder and knees. A medicine-man holding an egg in his right hand rubbed gently with it over her head. While murmuring he broke open the upper end of the egg, took off fragments of the eggshell and poured the contents in a vessel to examine it closely. The medicine-man showed the egg to an old man sitting there. The egg had an 'eye', which pointed to a river spirit. The medicine-man opined that the river spirit was cross with the woman because she had done something evil to him. He advised her to kill a white and a red chicken and to take them together with a bottle of rice liquor to the stream while being accompanied by three men. There she should make her offering to the river spirit."

I learned that the water-spirit gets most upset with a woman who washes her clothes stained with menstrual blood in the rivulet. He punishes such a woman by making her sterile. In the often narrated story of the magical contest between the Lawā king Khun Luang Wilangka and the Mōn queen of Haripunjaya, Chama Thevi, it was always repeated that she weakened him by sending a cap made from her skirt as a gift. But the essential part was not told, i.e. that this cloth was soaked with her menstrual blood, a most powerful and fatal charm (informant: Phra' Thawī, พระตำ, in Chiangmai).

On my first visit to B.Ōmphāi Luang the *samangs* were not conspicuous but there was an omnipresent man whom they called at that time 'sa' lā' (ဆာလံ), a Shan word also used in northern Thailand and meaning 'expert' (Thai: *chāng* ช่าง). Obayashi whom I had told about this man was amazed not to find any 'sa' lā' when he went there. No wonder, as the use of this word was a consequence of misunderstanding and bad interpretation. Next time I found out that in the Umphāi group the customary designation of this man is *gorīd* (ကိုရီဒ်, *gauhīd*); in B.La'ub he is called *phuiīd* (Rangsit 1942/45, 701: *phūi*=human being).

The North Thai word is *tonhīd*, ต้นฮีด (*ton*, ต้น=a trunk, stalk, but also : beginning, source; and *hīd*=*rīd*=preserver of old customs and usages). A *tonhīd* is said to be responsible for the observation and preservation of old customs. In B.Ōmphāi Luang the *tonhīd* indicates what sacrifices will be performed and when, but from B.Den over B.Yāēg to B.Ōmphāi Luang all three *tonhīd* are *samang*. So it is clear that with the exception of death-rites the important ceremonies are implemented by the *samang-tonhīd*. These exist also in B.B5 Luang (Srisawasdi 1963, 161, 163).

In B.Ōmphāi Luang they explained that anyone can be a *gorīd*—he need not be a *samang*; we already heard that the *gorīd* Nāi Lū is a commoner. It is this commoner-*gorīd* who arranges the paraphernalia for a burial, who makes the thread-squares to be hung up at the grave and who performs the sacrifices connected with the death-rites. Also it is he who acts as medicine-man and treats sick persons. He tries to find out which spirit caused the illness and then works by magic means and by offering to these spirits. These spirit-doctors are quite a special kind of people; for each of their services they get 15 Baht.

When a *samang* dies in B.La'ub the *phuirīd* must be called. The same is true in B.Ōmphāi Luang and in B.Pā Pāē (see p. 261) and certainly in all villages where *samang* live; the *samangs* are not allowed to have anything to do with death-ceremonies and burial. In B.La'ub the *phuirīd* must be a *lām*; this again indicates that the *lāms* in this village have a rank for themselves. Still, our informant in 1963/64, the *phuirīd* Nāi Lōg (โลก) was at the same time *phū chuai* of the then headman Nāi Bun Som (บุญสม) who was later killed when hunting a wounded bear; two of his men were also badly hurt on this ill-fated enterprise.

The *samang* in B.La'ub hold their sacrifices by themselves with their own *jāu ngāu* (จ้าวเงา) and *ta'nog* (ตะน็อก). These are the designations in the north for the *tonhīd* directing the sacred actions and the sacrificer to the spirits upon an altar (*dyōng*), murmuring prayers all the while. Sometimes *jāu ngāu* and *ta'nog* are one and the same man, as in La'āng Tāi where the *samang* Nāi La'mū is *jāu ngāu* and *ta'nog* for his one-house-group called *samang praem*. He makes all offerings for it by himself.

The following are some remarks on the *tonhīd* (*gorīd*) or *jāu ngāu* and the *ta'nog* from B.Tūn up north :

B.Tūn : Nāng Sug Khā-āi (นางสุข คำฮ้าย), the mother of the headman Un Khamjan, is *gorīd*, the headman is *ta'nog*.

B.Sām : When performing ceremonies the *gorīd* wears a long white shirt in rough cotton fabric (Lawā : *pīndiē*) which must be woven by a virgin, a category of person regarded as sacred in many belief systems and "is looked at as endowed with apotropaeic power" (Sarasin, 1934, 139). In former times this shirt served also as garment for corpses.

B.Gōg Nōi : The headman Gōn Banyāyom of this *samang* village is *jāu ngāu* of a family group.

B.Hō' : Nāi Peng is *jāu ngāu* of the *yong-gw'* group; he leads its ceremonies while the headman Run Khunwong is *ta'nog* of the same group and offers to the spirits.

B.Gōg Luang : Each of the two groups *yong yīag* and *yong khro'* has its *jāu ngāu* and its *ta'nog*.

B.Pae' : The *gorīd* and spirit-doctor (*mō phī*) is Nāi Nan (นายแนน). When a *samang* on the advice of the *jāu ngāu* must offer a brown dog to the stair-spirit (Thai : *phī bandai*, ผีบันได) to take an illness off an inmate, he must ask an ordinary Lawā to perform the sacrifice. Here also *samangs* are forbidden to eat dog meat (and roe) as it is 'low' (cf. p. 258).

B.La'āng Nuea : The *jāu ngāu* is a woman : Nāng Piang (นางเปียง) is about 50 years old and unmarried. If she dies without children the people will choose somebody from her family. It is she who makes known when a rite has to be performed. The execution lies in the hands of the *ta'nog* who is the headman Bau Khamhuan.

Concluding the section on social ranks, we see that all prominent men of the Lawā are religious leaders in some way or other. Even the headmen who are primarily functionaries of the state often hold a leading or executive position in this respect. Where there are *samang*, the big *samang* is, as a rule, responsible for the major ceremonies. He also is the *tonhūd*, the preserver of ancient customs. In B.Pā Pāc and B.La'ub he is assisted by the *lāms*.

In the northern villages without *samang* the religious leader and *tonhūd* is the *jāu ngāu*. The man who on his directions kills and offers the sacrificial animals is the *ta'nog* or sacrificer. It is remarkable that

among the *tonhīd*, be he called *gorīd* as in B.Tun or *jāu ngāu* as in B.La'āng Nuea, we find two women, a fact which throws light on the respected position of women in Lawā society.

Finally, the performance of death-rites and of magic actions and sacrifices to soothe evil spirits which strike people with illness is the task of a medicine-man, commonly also called *gorīd*.

D. Some religious items

1. Nyoe' nyū

Perhaps one might call this a 'ritual house' which corresponds to Kunstadter's 'ceremonial house' (*lat* or *ñja ñju*, 1965, 41). His expression 'communal ceremonial building' (1965, 30) conveys even better the idea of its function in ceremonial activities, especially in death rites; it is however also used as a guest house by the whole community so the term 'community house' would also be appropriate in this context. Obayashi (1966, 247) speaks of the *nyu-yūn* in B.Pā Pāē as of an assembly house "which one rather could call a 'hall of ceremonies' as it is said that food is brought there for the dead". Srisawasdi (1963, 179) also calls it a 'house of ceremonies' but at the same time (1963, 177, 179) a 'spirit house' assuming that it is the abode of the great village spirit. Similarly, Holladay says "spirit house" but also uses the very unsuitable word 'temple' (Seidenfaden 1940, 30). In the north this house is indeed the abode of the important *nyoe' nyū* spirit *sabaig*.

The designation of the *nyoe' nyū* as an 'assembly' or 'meeting' house (Steinmann/Rangsit 1939, 165, 167: *yu*; Rangsit 1945, 496; Obayashi 1964, 201, 205 and 1966, 247, 253/54) I found was rejected in the Umphāi group; there people were said to assemble in front of the ritual house, never in it.

Still, Kunstadter (1967, 7), speaking of B.Pā Pāē, also calls it "a building just outside the village which is used for village meetings and as the site for the next village-wide ceremony", and (1967, 13): "a meeting of all the men is held at the *lat* in the morning". With this information from Kunstadter we can conclude that what he calls the 'ceremonial house' is also used as an 'assembly house'. Only it is difficult

to see how the many men of a whole village could scramble into this rather small and much delapidated house where our few men hardly had enough breathing space — perhaps it has been repaired since our stay in 1964. I suppose that only the elders enter the house and that the mass of the villagers squat outside. As an exception, in the south, there is yet a second and smaller *nyoe' nyū* in the western part of B.Pā Pāe across the rivulet. It is for the people whose ancestors once came from B.Changmō Nōi and who are led by their own *samang*.

Usually the northern Lawā have in their villages more than one *nyoe' nyū* belonging to different family groups or sections. They are much smaller than in the south and are in such bad repair that they cannot be used as guest-houses, although rites are still performed in the most decayed ones. In the northern villages guests must stay in the porch of the headman's house even if they should like to settle down in a bigger or nicer house because he is the representative both of the village and of the Thai government.

With the exception of B.Dong everywhere the *nyoe' nyū* are built on very low wooden posts, generally not more than 60 cm high, as there are no domestic animals housed below them. Elsewhere the village houses are 1.60-1.80 m from the ground above the pigsties and hen-houses. In every *nyoe' nyū*, even in the tiniest ones, there is one fire-place, 1-1.20 m square, and sunk about 10 cm into the bamboo floor; it is covered with sand and ashes, and in the centre are three stones or an iron tripod for putting on pots. There the meat of the animals, usually sacrificed on the ground below, will be cooked.

A great difference between south and north is that in the south, except in B.Pā Pāe where I cannot remember having seen the like, the posts and rafters inside the *nyoe' nyū* are copiously carved, but never in the north. (See section on "Art")

Another outstanding feature of the southern villages is that in the village place before the *nyoe' nyū* the double *sagangs*, carved beautifully in their upper part, are rammed into the ground. In the north there is no plaza (a very serviceable word used by Obayashi). The *nyoe' nyū* are more or less outside the villages and, near them, thick and stumpy single *sagangs*, much shorter than in the south, are put up. These

northern *sagangs*, cut off flat on top, have no board-like carved upper part but only some simple figures incised around them.

Everywhere the *sagangs* serve for tethering the buffaloes and bulls to be sacrificed at the (nowadays very rare) big community ceremonies. Pictures for comparison of the *sagangs* will be provided in the section on "Art". A provisional list of publications where photographs of *sagangs* can be found is given below⁹.

In the following notes I shall describe the *nyoe' nyū* with their appertaining sacrificial posts village by village.

Bān Den

The *nyoe' nyū* is on the left-hand when entering the village from B.Yāēg. It is still in quite good condition. At the first post inside one notices the fine carving of a big rosette. To the right side of the entrance steps the short *ngīu* and a few metres farther away a double *sagang* are

- 9) Steinmann/Rangsit 1939, 166, Abb. 1: "Wooden post for the Ta-Yuang (at Umpai)."
 167, „ 2: Sagang on the village place of Umpai (Good picture showing three spear-heads.)
 168, „ 3: "Village place of Umpai... c) short unadorned post for the Ta-Yuang. d) Long carved double posts for the Pi-Sapait."
 170, „ 5: Various types of carved posts for bull sacrifices from three villages of the Umpai-group.
- Rangsit 1945, 493: Sacrificial post on the village place of B.Tūn.
 494: The sacrificial posts of Umpai.
- Funke 1960, 141: Sacrificial posts for buffaloes in Umpai.
 143: Carved post for pig sacrifice. (This is not correct, the carved posts are for buffalo or bull sacrifices only.)
- Obayashi 1964, Fig. 1: Plaza of La'ub with two of the three *sagangs*.
 Fig. 4: One of the three ritual houses at B.La'ub, to the left of the entrance an offering post called *ngiu*.
 Fig. 10: Carved post for buffalo sacrifice at B.Pā Pāē. This *sagang* is said to have been brought down from B.Chāngmō Nōi.
 Fig. 11: "Phallic post for buffalo-sacrifice" at B.La'ub. (According to the informants there is no trace of phallism in Lawā culture.)

standing, a so-called *sagang lui*. It consists of round posts, not carved, with only one incised line toward the top. Between *sagang lui* and *ngīu* a sacred guava tree (Lawā : *mamūt*, Thai : *ton farang*, หน่อฝรั่ง) is planted, closed in by a protective fence made out of four bamboo halves. We did not find out the real significance of that tree but as I have seen a fence of the same kind of tree in B.Ōmphāi Luang, adorned with tufts of raw cotton, one can be sure that it plays a role in offering ceremonies.

Bān Yāeg

The *nyoe' nyū*, just at the boundary to B.Ōmphāi Luang, measures 8×5 m; the walls, made from boards, are only 1 m high so that the smoke can escape between them and the roof. The house is in a very good state and perfectly serviceable for guests. The entrance is on the long side to the right (east) over four steps. Three or four boards running the length of the room are laid on girders, and upon them are deposited the skulls of sacrificial buffaloes and cattle; still, on our stay there was only one jaw-bone.

On a frame over the fire-place near the entrance are put, parallel to the narrow side of the house, two huge drums, 2 m long and 50 cm ϕ . They are made from wood and covered over at both sides with cattle hide, and never with buffalo hide as some authors have said. In the Ūmphāi group the larger drum is called the husband and the other one his wife. If somebody dies they are beaten with thick wooden drum-sticks, about 15 cm long; it is strictly forbidden to beat them at any other time as it would bring death to the village. At the same time or alternating with the drums a big gong of first class bell metal, about 70 cm ϕ , is beaten; it drowns by far the hollow sound of the drums which does not reach very far as the drums' hide thongs are never stretched (in short, there is no sign of care for the drums). As a matter of fact, except in the ritual houses of B.Yāeg and B.Ōmphāi Luang there is hardly anywhere a drum with its hide on, and many of them have even gone to pieces.

Unlike the above statement Srisawasdi (1963, 179) writes: "One beats on drum and gong to invite the village spirit" at a big sacrifice, and Kunstadter (1965, 3) remarks that formerly the constituent villages of B.Pā Pāe could summon aid from one another "by beating on the large drums which each village had".

In front of the ritual house at B.Yāeg there is only a simple uncarved double *sagang lui*, and a low *ngīu* near the entrance.

Bān Ōmphāi Luang

There are three drums in the *nyoe' nyū*, a rare case. The biggest drum, 2.30 m long and 60 cm ϕ , lies farthest to the west. Informants called it the eldest brother, and the other ones, 2 m long and 50 cm ϕ as in B.Yāeg, the younger and youngest brother. Other informants said it is the husband with two wives which sounds less plausible as the Lawā are known to practice strict monogamy and even to mock at the Thai who, they are aware, may take more than one wife. On the occasion of death I saw only the big and the middle drum beaten but this certainly was quite accidental, just as Obayashi (1966, 254), observing a man beating the gong with his left hand, must just have met with a left-hander. In all this there apparently lies no importance whatsoever.

Most spectacular in B.Ōmphāi Luang is the display of sacrificial posts on the large area in front of the *nyoe' nyū* which is situated on a slight hill in S.E.-N.W. direction (Fig. 3). About 8 m from the entrance are the thick *ngīu*, about 1.20 m high. According to Steinmann/Rangsit (1939, 165) they are used for pig sacrifices to the Ta-Yuang. On the other hand, we were told that pigs are never sacrificed at the *ngīu*, only a white cock simultaneously with a big buffalo sacrifice at the *sagang*; the blood of the cock is then smeared on the *ngīu* serving as altar.

5 m to the south of the *ngīu* stands the *sagang lui*, about 3 m high, a double post without decorations, and 5 m west of it the main double post, the *sagang la'* (=big post). It is 3-4 m high, thinned at its upper end to be board-like and there beautifully carved. This arrangement of three pairs of posts is unique. The three Chāngmō villages and B.Tūn farther north as well as B.Dong have the carved *sagang la'* but no *sagang lui*;

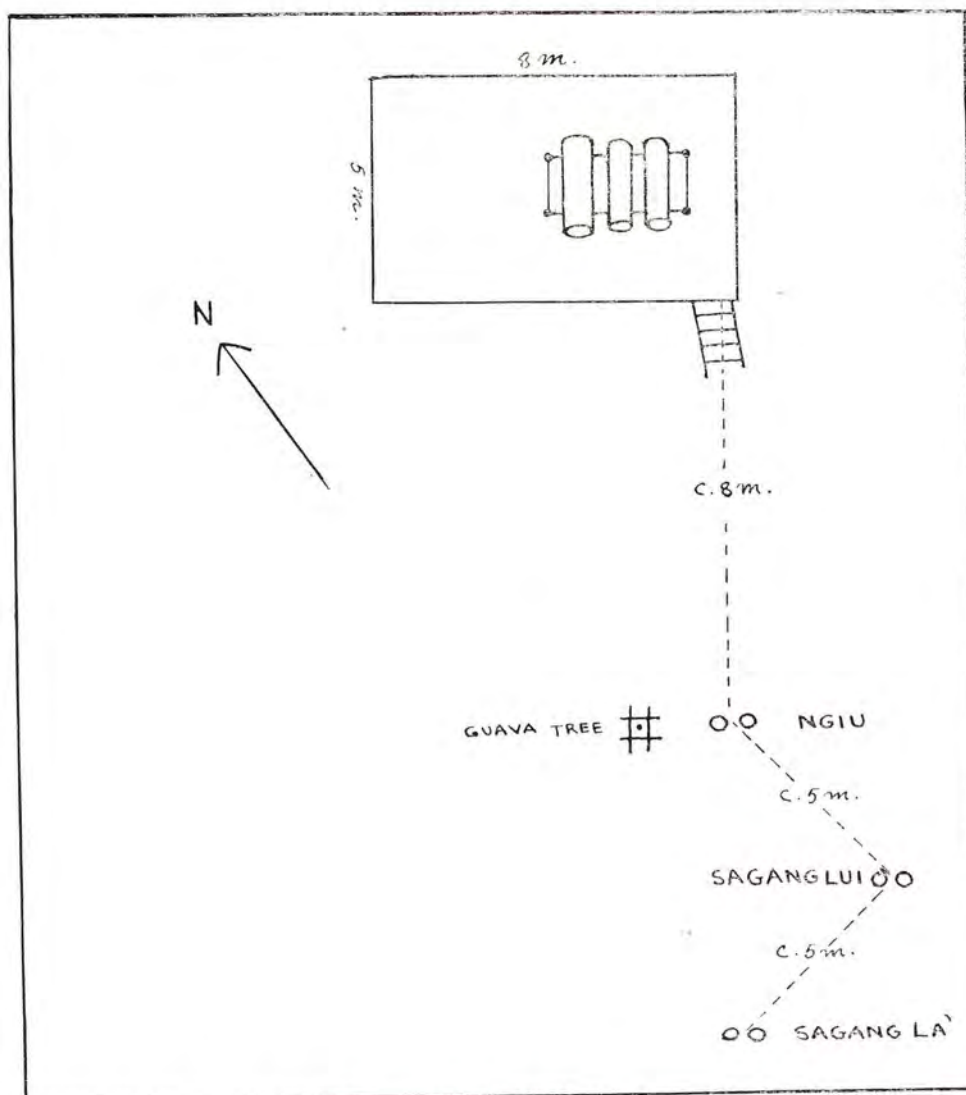


Fig. 3 Ritual house, drums and *sagangs* in Omphāi Luang.

B.Den and B.Yæg have a *sagang lui* but no *sagang la'*. The *ngīu* is to be met with more or less everywhere but often in differing forms and called by other names; it is never spoken of as '*sagang' ngīu*', but just plainly as *ngīu*.

In Omphāi Luang they asserted that whilst erecting a new *sagang* a live chick must be stamped into the hole. The double posts are to stand very close as if "bitten together" (Thai: gadgan, กัดกัน). The little squares forming rings around the *sagang la'* (and the mbueang posts for the dead) are called *sai*.

Bān Chāngmō Manōd

The *nyoe' nyū* is situated on the northeastern side of the plaza. It is slightly damaged and from the outside two big drums, still with hides, are visible. On it a *sagang la'* is standing, the carvings of which are quite different from those usually met with in the Umphāi group; we shall revert to this later (under "Art"). In front of the ritual house is a little guava tree with its bamboo enclosure and 2 m farther on the *ngīu*.

Bān Chāngmō Nōi

The *nyoe' nyū* is built somewhat isolated to the west of the village. It does not show signs of decay. Inside are good carvings of lizards on its posts. On the left side of the entrance the *ngīu* with a stout head-part is standing, with the *sagang la'* about 20 m in front of the house.

Bān Chāngmō Luang

The *nyoe' nyū* of this village is situated at its southern end where the path starts in the direction of B. La'ub. It has fallen badly into ruin but just here the best carvings of all *nyoe' nyū* are to be found. Nobody knows who executed them and nobody is able to repeat such good work. The carved posts of both of the narrow sides of the house are 1.60 m high and 20 cm wide. Their figures (lizards etc.) are in 6 cm high relief. The cross-beams carved on their lower sides are 4 m long, 30 cm wide and 4 cm deep, a central ridge 5 cm. high protrudes along the whole length, and both sides of this ridge are carved.

In this ritual house which has its *ngīu* with an enclosed guava tree to the left of the entrance, there are two big drums – without hides. The people said laughingly, in case of death they now drum on the wooden edges! Should the people wish to cover their drums anew with cow hide which, if need be, they easily could buy from the Karēn, a buffalo must be sacrificed to the *phī ngýuáng* (village spirit) and this, they bluntly said, is too expensive.

The *sagang la'*, again with special carving patterns, is standing about 20 m from the ritual house in the middle of the broad village road.

Bān Tūn

The *nyoe' nyū*, 10 × 5 m, in the old part of the village, rebuilt after a devastating fire in 1963 (see p. 250), is situated at the eastern side of the village road in front of the headman's house. Nāi Un Khamjan, a somewhat difficult character, did not like my climbing up into the shaky edifice and warned I would have to pay for every board I broke. Nothing happened; I photographed the big lizards on each of the two main posts, carved by Nāi Gu' Nēbud and Nāi So' Puplā. These men are the only living artists in wood-carving whose names are known in the Lawā hills.

There are two big drums in this ritual house and just in front of it the *ngīu*; 10 m farther on is the double *sagang la'*, its upper part carved a bit differently from B.Ōmphāi Luang and on the whole rather thinner. Going up north this is the last double *sagang la'* carved in its upper part. From now on there are only single and uncarved *sagangs*.

A legend of how the double *sagang* in the south came about is told by Steinmann/Rangsit (1939, 171): "A demon, Rai Puen Oit, residing on a near mountain, is said to have shot an arrow on the sacrificial post, apparently single in former times, and split it into two; since then two posts are put up, as people cannot know which one of the two halves of the split spirit post the mighty village spirit Pi-Sapait has chosen as his abode."

Bān Sām

This village is separated from B.Tūn and is not easily reached from the southern Lawā on account of the heavy jungle. Such a separation has certainly contributed to many socio-religious items in the north being quite different from those in the south. Here we first meet with the division into several *nyoe' nyū* groups so typical of the northern Lawā. From here on also there are no more carvings in the rather small ritual houses.

In B.Sām there are four *lād* (here said for *nyoe' nyū*) originally with three big drums each; male and female drums are unknown. In sequence of their seniority the ritual houses are :

1. *yong prāem* (*prāem*=oldest) for only : 1 house
 This is the oldest ritual house standing at the lowest point of the village. In front of it the only still standing *sagang*, totally rotten, is leaning against a tree. Only two drums are left, of which one is broken.
2. *yong alangmā* (in which we stayed), 100 m north of 3. for : 8 houses
3. *yong blōng*, in the south of the village. for : 2 houses
 Here stood the houses of the *yong blōng* section which were transferred to the northern part of the village. The *nyoe' nyū* was rebuilt on the old spot, and it still belongs to the *yong blōng*.
4. *yong mulanghōen*. The three drums have no more hides. Only in front of this *nyoe' nyū* is a post called *sabaig* standing. It is 80 cm high and at its top has a diameter of 20 cm. There are two smaller posts 20 cm to the left and 25 cm to the right put up as 'guardians' (Fig. 4). for : 20 houses

Every year after harvest a female pig is killed in the *nyoe' nyū*, then some of it is offered to the three posts below by putting

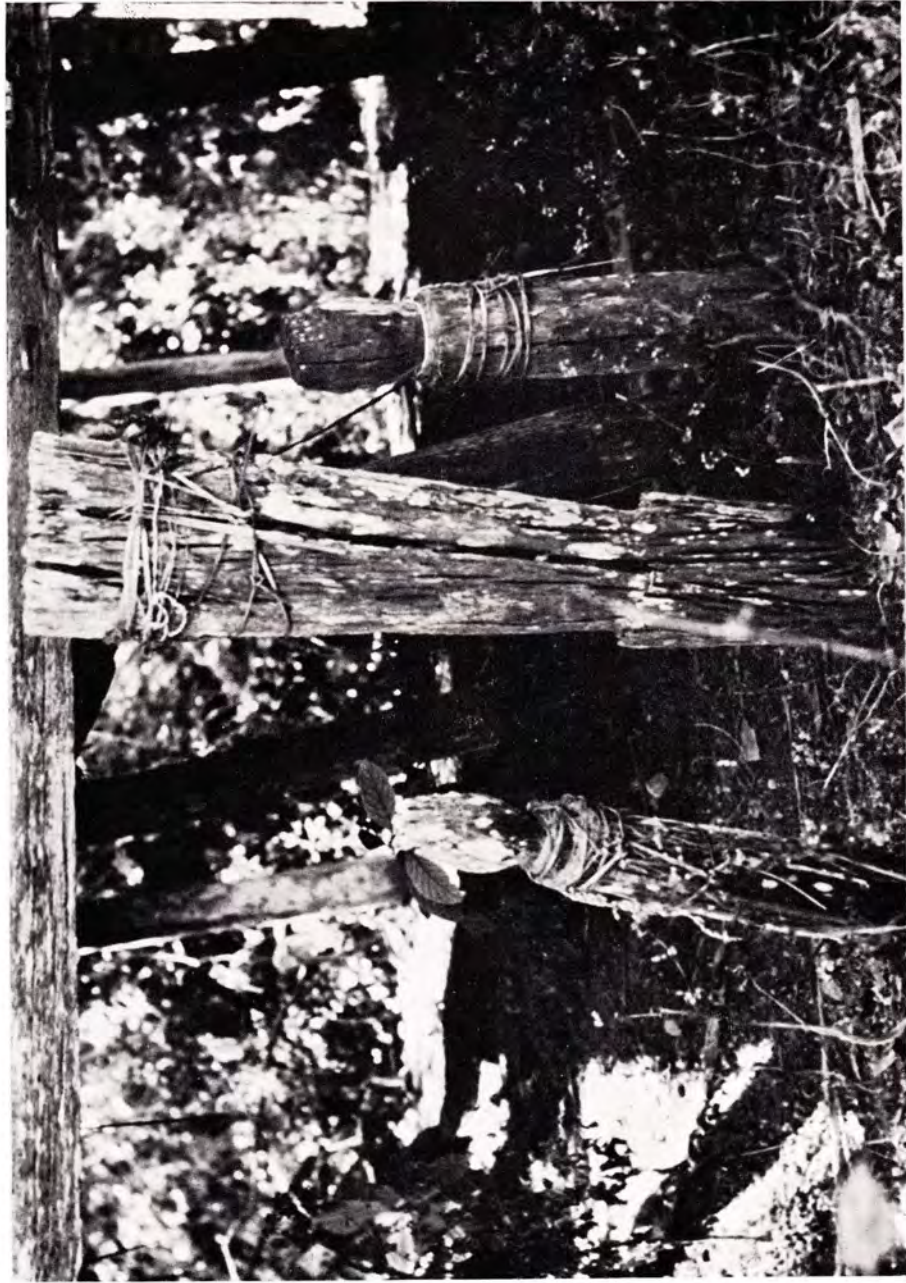


Fig. 4 The *sabaig* with its guardians in front of the ritual house *yong mulanghœn* in B.Sam.

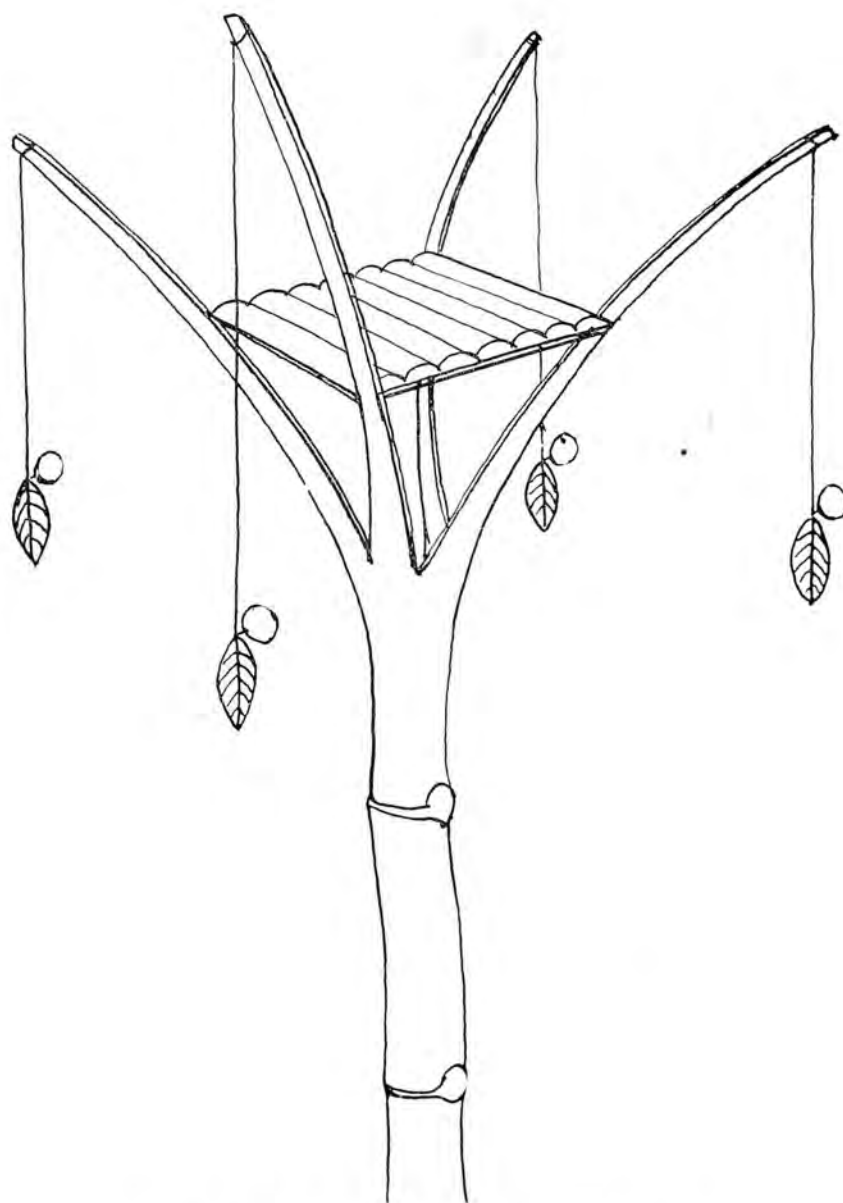


Fig. 5 Altar for the spirit of a ritual house in B.Sām.
(Drawing by Shudhi)

it on the *sabaig* post and smearing blood on the two 'guardians'. All four *nyoe' nyū* receive their sacrifice on the same day. At the ritual houses of the *yong* 1.-3. an altar is erected, made of *kho yu'* (Lawā: *kho*=tree), for *tang ngō* (*phī sabaig*), the *nyoe' nyū* spirit. To these altars cotton flocks are fixed to symbolize stars, and from each of the four altar branches a thread hangs down with a leaf and a cotton tuft representing a flower (Fig. 5). On the sacrificial day strict village closure is ordained, indicated by *talaeos* (signs made of open woven bamboo laths) at the roads entering the village; these must be put up by a young bachelor. No villager is allowed to leave the village, no foreigner to enter it. Anyone who in spite of this prohibition trespasses must pay four *thāēb* (rupies), but this, they said, has never happened. Once a group of people from Māējāēm had to camp one day outside but they were provided with food and water by the villagers.

In Bān Sām all of the 31 houses are in a section possessing a *nyoe' nyū*. This is not at all the case in other northern villages.

Once there existed single *sagangs* but they are not in use. Two of them can still be seen, one of which is mentioned above under 1. The second one has been reduced in the upper village to a simple beam half buried in the ground to keep the earth from falling into the terrace dug as a working place for two sawers (see p. 251). Once it was cut squarely on top, and now the traces of some rings formerly engraved can still be seen. The oldest family has long wanted to put up a new *sagang* but they pretend "to have no time". The costs would be high: one buffalo and one cattle bull from each of the four sections; they estimate a total cost of more than 4000 Baht,

Bān Mūēd Lōng

There is one *nyoe' nyū* left about 50 m to the west of the village. In earlier times there existed three until the people of two village sections emigrated to the lowlands. There are no drums, only a gong, "because the ancestors had no drums either". On the west side of the *nyoe' nyū* are two altars (*dyōng sabaig*) for the *nyoe' nyū* spirit which replace the *ngīu* of the southern Lawā. Inside there are two *hasē* tied to the main posts; they are the same as elsewhere, the *yōng 'āchók* for the house spirit, i.e. thin bamboos with a little basket for offerings attached to them. At the yearly sacrifice to the *phī sabaig* (*nyoe' nyū* spirit) two pigs are tethered to these posts, then killed by an unmarried man who sticks them in their right chests, and very little of the meat cooked above is offered to the spirit upon the two altars (*dyōng sabaig*).

If somebody dies the *gorīd* must go to the *nyoe' nyū* and tell the *phī sabaig* that one of his people has passed away and also how long the corpse will be kept in the house.

10 m to the west of the *nyoe' nyū* a single *sagang* is standing for the buffalo sacrifice. It is about 2.20 m high with a diameter of 20 cm; the top is cut straight off. Below the upper end there are deep engravings: alternately a circular hole and a cross (made up of five squares, as in the Swiss flag). Somewhat below, a kind of rolls, about 2 cm high and composed of small squares, ring the post; first there is one single roll, deeper down four rolls, and at the lowest point again one single roll.

Bān Gōg Nōi

There are four *nyoe' nyū* for lineages or family-names, of which a small one is at the western village entrance. One of them belongs to the *samang* line. Kunstadter (1966 c, 3) explains: "The *samang* lineage, which is exogamous within the community where it resides, is not considered to be a part of any constituent village." So in the north a separate *nyoe' nyū* is required for them.

In two of the ritual houses there is still a drum, but in the life-time of the headman they have never been beaten,

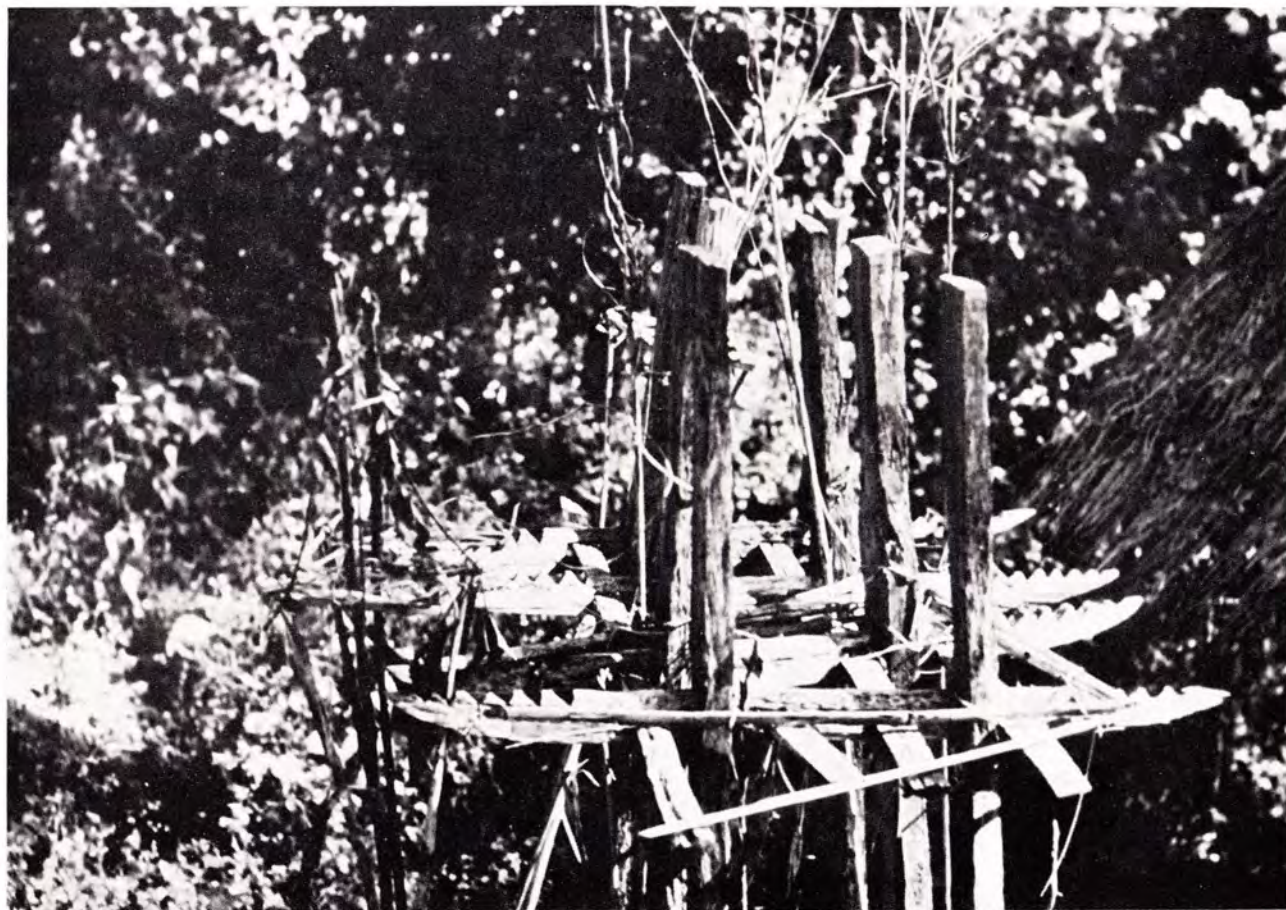


Fig. 6 Indented altars (*dyōng sabaig*) for the spirit of a ritual house (its roof to the right) in B.Gəg N5i.

Close to the *nyoe' nyū*, *sabaig* altars (here they said *sambaig*) are erected for the *nyoe' nyū* spirit; the indentations on the sticks supporting the bamboo laths for putting on the offerings are said to be pure decoration (Fig. 6). Indeed, at some altars the carving is very superficially done, and at others even completely lacking.

In about October/November, before harvest, in every *nyoe' nyū* two pigs, a male and a female, are sacrificed.

There is no *sagang* in the village.

Bān Hō'

The village has no *samang*. There are four groups :

1. *yong gɔ'*. It owns the only still standing *nyoe'nyū*. for : 5 houses
The headman Run Khunwong acts as its
ta'nog, offering as such to the spirits.
The *jāu ngāu*, conducting the group's
ceremonies, is Nāi Peng.
2. *yong yueag*. Its families have come from B.Thuan, for : 5 houses
once Lawā, now Karēn (see p. 241).
3. *yong ga'*. for : 3 houses
4. Without *nyoe' nyū* 13 houses

For the *nyoe' nyū* spirit *phī sabaig* of *yong gɔ'*, two pigs are sacrificed in March every three years. For 2. and 3., the *nyoe' nyū* of which have broken down, there are no more sacrifices. A group wanting to build a new *nyoe' nyū* must sacrifice two buffaloes and two chickens from every house to the *phī sabaig*. There is no *sagang*. The last buffalo sacrifice took place when the headman was still a child (cf. p. 261 for B.Pae').

Bān Khōng

The village has no *samang*. There are four *nyoe' nyū* groups, every one with a *jāu ngāu* and a *ta' nog* :

1. yong khrōng labāu. This first ritual house of the village belonging to the family of the headman Pud Tānon, in a thicket upon the hill, is totally rotten (Fig. 7.). for : 1 house
2. yong khrōng la' mue' for : 8 houses
3. yong dro' for : 2 houses
4. yong mumble' for : 1 house

Only 12 houses have a *nyoe' nyū*, the other 21 houses have none. There are two broken drums in the *yong khrōng labāu*, otherwise there is only a gong. This village also has no *sagang*.

They offer a female pig to the *phī gum* in the sacred grove (Thai: *dong gam*, ดงกม) before cutting the rice. On the evening of this day everything is prepared for the sacrifice to the *phī sabaig* on the following morning. A male and a female pig are offered by all *nyoe' nyū* groups once yearly on the same day, and small pieces of pork are put on the *dyōng sabaig* close to the *nyoe' nyū*.

Here a word must be said about the sacred groves. Kunstadter (1969 B, 5) has remarked: "Occasional patches of uncut forests . . . remain around Lua' village sites, and in forests preserved as homes for spirits." And for B.Pā Pāe (1970, 2): "a sacred forest remains uncut on the two closest hillsides". Indeed, probably all villages (together with B.B5 Luang) have near them such a sacred grove where felling trees and shooting birds are prohibited. At B.Den a row started when one of our tour members unknowingly retreated into their unspoiled forest, and we had to pay a fine of about 30.- Baht in kind.

Bān Gōg Luang

There are no more *samangs*, and only two groups both with a *jāu ngāu* and a *ta' nog*:

1. yong yīag, to which belongs the headman. In the totally ruined *nyoe' nyū* are two damaged drums (Fig. 8). for : 8 houses
2. yong khrō' with only one drum; the other one "was thrown into the jungle because it was so loud that in Ōmphāi cups and plates broke". for : 12 houses



Fig. 7 The oldest ritual house of B.Khōng, *yong khrōng labāu*, with its broken drums.



Fig. 8 The completely decayed ritual house *yong y'ag* with its drums at B.Gag Luang. The small offering basket of split bamboo to the right proves that offerings are still made there.



Fig. 9 Mueang Saengjam, headman of B. Gog Luang, close to the *sagang gum* for *yong ylag*.

There are *nyoe' nyū* for 20 houses, but 36 houses have none.

As in B.Khōng every group must yearly sacrifice two pigs, a male and a female one, to the *nyoe' nyū* spirit *phī sabaig*.

About 200 m north of the village there is a glade with cross-roads in the jungle. From there 100 m W.S.W. into a sacred grove is a *sagang* standing for the *yong yīag*, and 100 m from it to the N.E. another one for the *yong khrō'*. Both are called *sagang gum* serving for sacrifices to the village spirit *gum*. They are about 1.80 m high with 20 cm ϕ , cut flat on top, and incised above and farther down with three rings each and a simple lozenge pattern in between (Fig. 9).

Bān Pae'

In the lowest part of this *samang* village there are five *nyoe' nyū*, three of them in one line about 30 m long, standing rather close to each other. There is a *sagang* standing obliquely in front of three of these ritual houses (nos.2.-4.) for the sacrifice to their respective *phī sabaig* (Fig. 10).

From E. to W. their names are :

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. <i>yong mong glāng tīa</i> (without <i>sagang</i>) | for : 8 houses |
| 2. <i>yong samang ra'</i> with <i>sagang sabaig samang ra'</i> | for : 6 houses |
| This <i>yong</i> is decayed, and the drums are broken. | |
| 3. <i>yong mong rāng ra'</i> with <i>sagang mong rāng ra'</i> . | for : 10 houses |
| There is one drum. | |
| 4. <i>yong mombē</i> with <i>sagang yong mombē</i> | for : 9 houses |
| 5. <i>yong mong ra' ói</i> (without <i>sagang</i>) | for : 8 houses |

41 houses have *nyoe' nyū*, but 19 houses have none.

To the *phī sabaig* all five groups must sacrifice pigs on the same day in August when the rice starts to ripen. If only one rich group were to sacrifice alone, the spirits of the other ones would be jealous and punish their groups. The sacrificer of the animals must be from the wife's side of the *jāu ngāu*. As everywhere skulls and lower jaws of the immolated animals are kept on a shelf in the *nyoe nyū*, but we did not see any.

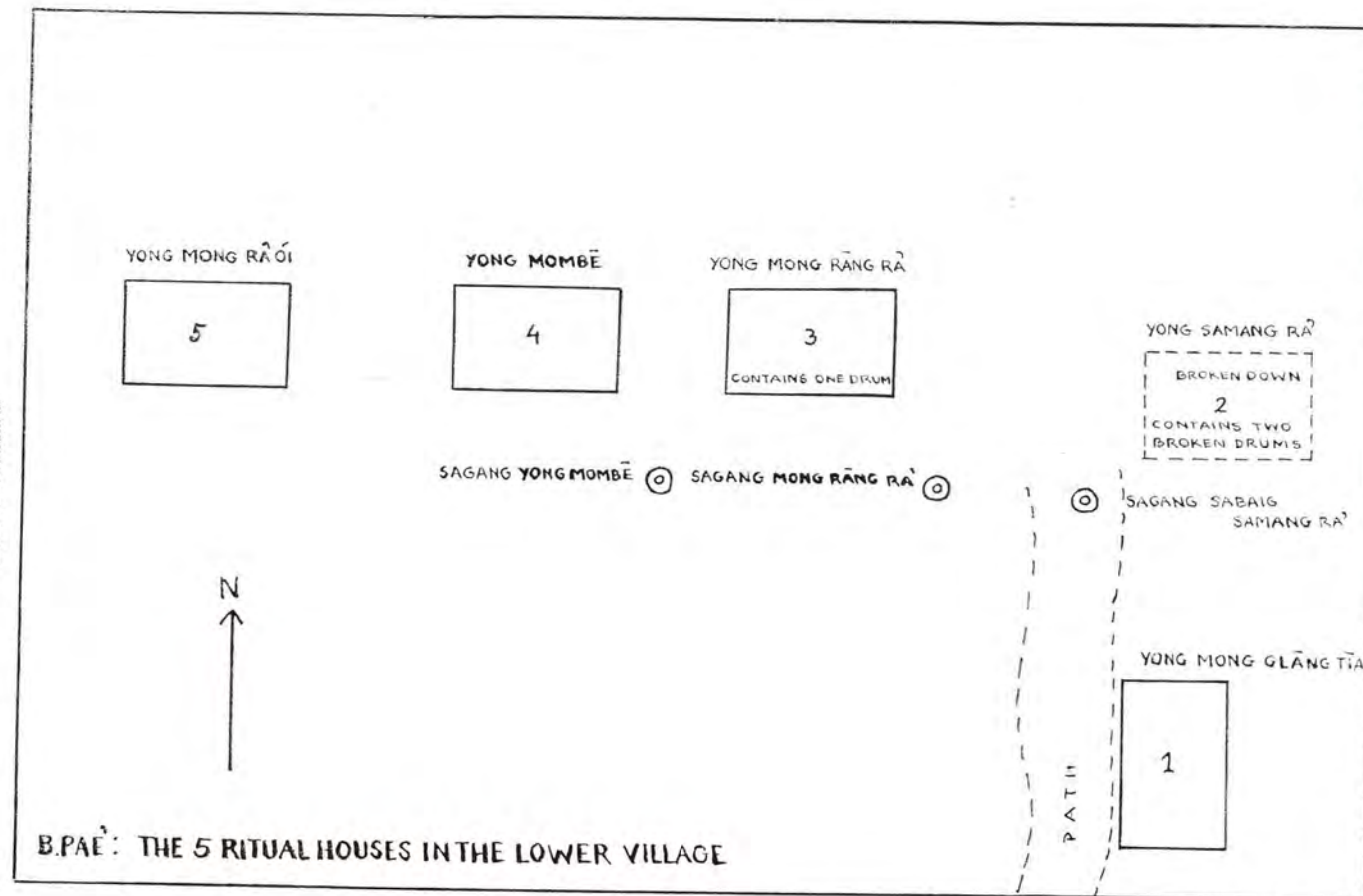


Fig. 10 The five ritual houses in the lower village of B.Pae'.

Steep up in the sacred forest south of the village there is yet another sacrificial place with *sagangs* for the village spirit *gum*. Of this we shall speak on a later occasion.

Bān La'āng Nuea

There are two *nyoe' nyū* :

1. *yong rang la' haung*, about 200 m outside the western entrance of the village. Its measurements are 6×5 m, the door is on the right front.
(*la' haung* < *hlaung*=high, Rangsit 1942/45,705.)
2. *yuong malāng*, very small and decayed down at the eastern village entrance. It is for two families from B.Sām.

There are no drums but two gongs are kept in the house of the female *jāu ngāu*, Nāng Piang.

In front of the *nyoe' nyū* there is a post about 1.20 m high, the *sagang sabaig*, flanked by two smaller ones, the *ngīu*. Here the *ngīu* are said not to be guardians but sacred posts which are parts of the *sabaig*. An altar, *yung sabaig* (*dyōng* elsewhere) is erected from forked branches between which plates of bamboo weaving, 12×10 cm, are fixed for depositing the offerings (Fig. 11). Yearly at the beginning of December, they said "on a Tuesday", a male pig is offered to the *sabaig* or *nyoe' nyū* spirit. The headman, in his capacity as *ta' nog*, gets half of the head at all the sacrifices. The blood is smeared on the two *ngīu*.

There is no high *sagang* in this village.

Bān La'āng Tāi

Of three *nyoe' nyū* (here again called *lād*) the two oldest ones are :

1. *yong samang prāem*, it measures only 3×2.5 m for : 1 house and has a *ngīu* with two posts at its sides called *yong* (*dyōng*) *sabaig*.

The *samang* Nāi La'mū is at the same time *jāu ngāu* and *ta' nog*.

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|----------------|
| 2. <i>yong khrɔʔ</i> , | also only 3 × 2.5 m. | for : 2 houses |
| 3. <i>yong moit</i> , | When more families joined the village a third <i>nyoe' nyū</i> had to be built, a bit bigger than the old ones; it is situated behind a sugar cane garden. On a board are lying two broken drums, the one to the left from the Karēn. In front of this ritual house three posts (s.above) are put up. The headman Lēng is <i>ta'nog</i> for it. | for : 6 houses |

Once yearly after harvest three chickens (two cocks and one hen) are offered to the *phī sabaig*, two of them outside the *nyoe' nyū*, and one inside. Their blood is smeared on the posts.

Bān Dong

This big village without *samang* has only one *nyoe' nyū* on the western ridge of the village, 100 m from the houses below. It is very spacious and on exceptionally high posts. On the left side a ladder of five rungs leads to the door. Inside are four drums, which is an unusual feature.

Directly in front of the *nyoe' nyū*, on its northern side, there are two *ngīu*, one about 1.20 m high and the other about 1 m. 10 m farther to the north there are three high *sagangs* standing in a narrow cluster. Their upper part is carved similarly to those of the southern Lawā (Umpāi group). Two of them have a height of about 3 m, one standing close before them is about 30 cm lower. They are called *sabaig ta'juang* which the informant translated as : *sagang* of the village. At these three *sagangs* a buffalo bull and a redbrown bull are sacrificed at the appointment of a new headman. The informant, Nāi Gāeo, 50 years old, has seen this ceremony only twice, the oldest man in the village only thrice : the first time for headman Nāi Som, the second time for headman Nāi Nūn, and the third time for the present headman Nāi



Fig. 11 The ritual house *yuong rang la'haung* at B.La'ang Nuea, seen from S.W. In front the *sagang sabaig* with its two *ngiu*; to the left of them the rest of the altar *yung sabaig*.

Bunthā. The sacrificial animals are tethered to the triple *sagang*, and the headman selects two men to kill them with spears. The meat is cooked in the *nyoe' nyū*. It is a big offering festival at which 1000 people or more from other villages will assist. The inhabitants of B.Dong pay for the costs.

There is no more *sagang* for the *phī gum* (village spirit). The old one has broken down, and people say "they have no time to make a new one", in reality they are afraid of the very high costs. Still, they sacrifice a large pig to the *phī gum* after harvest at the northern village entrance.

At the two *ngīu*, in the fourth month (about February), before cutting the new field, two pigs are sacrificed to the forest spirit (Thai: *phī pā* ฟ้าป่า) of the new swidden. They are killed below, cooked in the *nyoe' nyū*, and the offering is put on the two *ngīu*.

I would just like to mention the somewhat strange behaviour of the old men of the village who refused to give any explanation of rites without permission from the headman who was temporarily absent.

Bān La'ub

The village is divided into four groups :

1. *juang mōid* This oldest *nyoe' nyū* belongs to the *samang*. Here there are three subgroups
 1. *samang*
 2. *juang mōid* (*mōi'*, *mōig*)
 3. *juang hē* (at first only for two, but now for six families)

The *jāu ngāu* of these three subgroups is Nāi Lōg, a *samang*.
 2. *juang tāēplōng* The *jāu ngāu* is Nāi Samū. for : 3 houses
 3. *juang la'mīang* for : 16 houses
 4. *juang Phra' Yēsū* (Christians), without *nyoe' nyū* 12 houses
- 47 families are within *nyoe' nyū* groups, the 12 Christian ones of course are not.

Yuang Hē was once situated near the big Karēn village B.Māe Sagwá. Some people departed from custom and the spirits punished them. All died with the exception of two families who took refuge in B.La'ub. They wanted to join a group but all but the *samang* refused. If anyone, Lawā or others, wants to live in La'ub, he must join a group, but only the *samangs* will accept them, though the immigrants never can be *samang*. And only the *samangs* can sacrifice to certain spirits. The new-comers have a special place to offer their sacrifices to these *samang* spirits; one of these is said to be called *ta'nāid* (sky spirit).

The *nyoe' nyū* of the three traditional groups, 5 × 4 m on wooden posts 60 cm high (of which four rows are parallel to the narrow side, and three rows lengthwise), are built around a plaza (Fig. 12). The impressive appearance of earlier times (Obayashi 1964, Fig. 1) has been much spoilt by a new banana and vegetable garden. There are no big drums, but only one small drum and four gongs which are beaten exclusively at ceremonies. In the centre of the narrow wall far from the door a spirit altar is fixed to the post; it consists of forked sticks which sustain a platform, 20 × 18 cm or 25 × 20 cm, made of four bamboo laths loosely connected with each other at distances of 2 cm by a bamboo thread. Through the length of the house, boards are laid on girders for depositing skulls and jaws of sacrificial animals over the spirit altar.

About 1 m in front of each *nyoe'nyū* a *ngīu*, called also *sabaid*, about 1.60 m high, is standing. To the *nyoe' nyū* spirit *sabaid*, in the ninth month, after harvest, a pig is sacrificed by each of the three groups and the offering is laid down on the *ngīu*. This sacrifice must be performed on the same day, first in the morning by the *samangs* at the *yuang moid*, then at intervals at the *yuang tāēplōng* and the *yuang la' mīang*. Every group has its own *jāu ngāu* and *ta'nog*.

6, 7, and 12 m from its respective ritual house are erected the massive single *sagang* posts, 3.40–3.50 m high with about 20 cm ϕ . They have a point in the form of a short pyramid with three upward incisions on each of its sides. From a point 40–60 cm below the top, the post is incised over a length of 15–20 cm, and in this incision three rows of thick square knobs, about 2 × 2 cm, are chiselled out 2–3 cm high. The upper form of

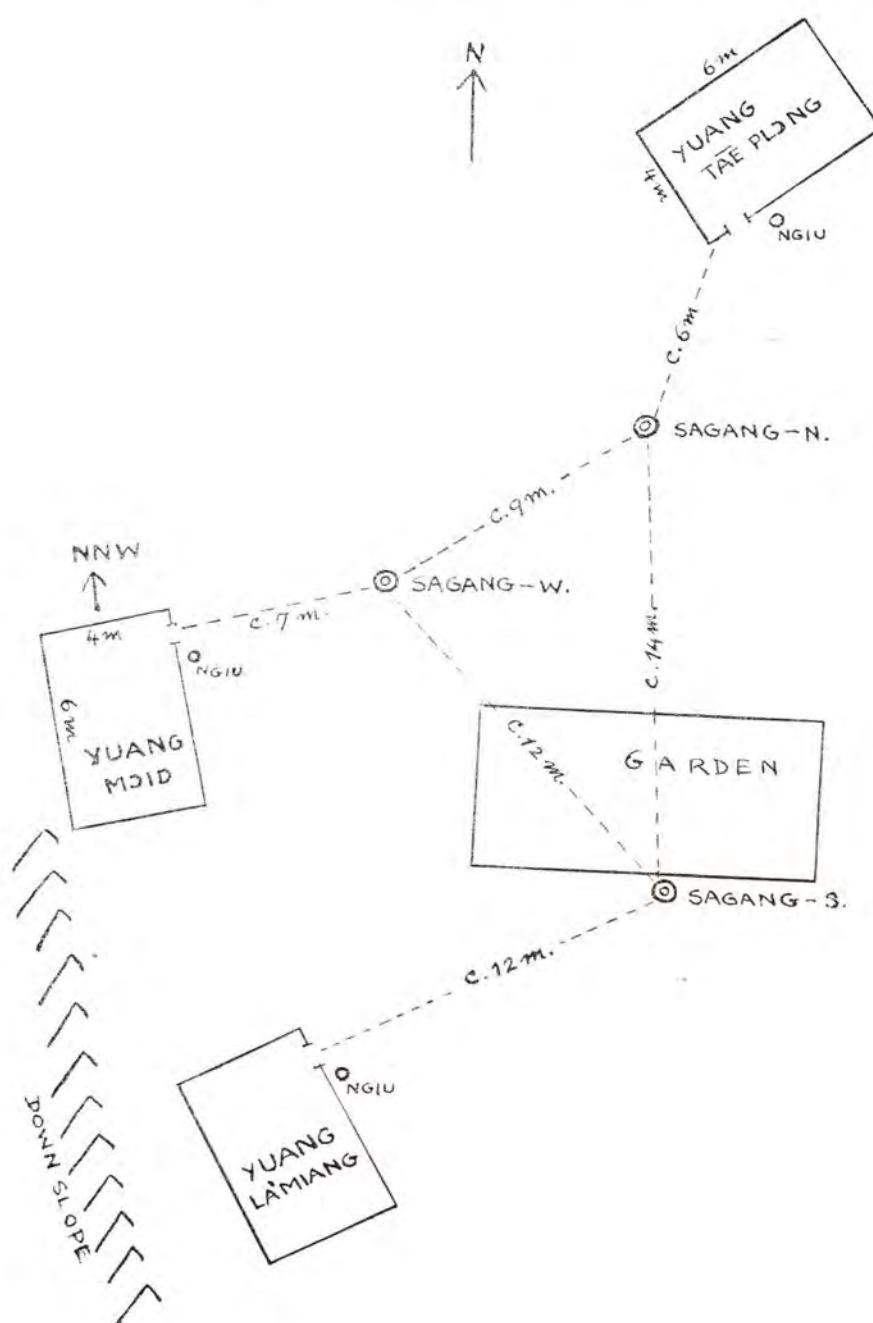


Fig. 12 B.La'ub: The three ritual houses with *sagang* and *ngiu*.

these posts induced Obayashi (1964, Fig. 11) to call them phallic; our informants however declined this idea sharply, and I myself cannot see anything phallic in the Lawā culture.

The owner of all three *nyoe' nyū* with their *sagang la'* is the village spirit *ta'yuang* (Thai : *phī mū bān*, ผีหมู่บ้าน) said to protect the houses against fire and bandits.

The big but rare sacrifices of bovidae to this spirit are executed at the same time at all three *sagangs*. The whole set-up is said to be a very old custom which has nothing to do with the practices of any other village.

Bān Pā Pāe

The ritual house at the northern entrance of the village's eastern half, where we passed a night in 1964, was then rather decayed. There were no drums, no spirit altar, no buffalo skulls, and no posts in front of it.

In the western village quarter across the rivulet, newer than the eastern one and, as a *samang* section immigrated from B.Chāngmō Nōi, there is a small ritual house without drums and buffalo skulls which, as they said, "had been lost". 2 m in front of its entrance is a post 1.40 m high, perhaps a kind of *ngīu*. We were told by our informant Nāi Bun Lā that at this post a red bull is sacrificed if a house burns down. Not much farther on the only *sagang* of B.Pā Pāe is erected (Obayashi 1964, Fig. 10) which is said to have been brought down from B.Chāngmō Nōi. It is about 3.50 m high, and close to its sides are stuck two small posts serving as reinforcements without any other significance. This *sagang* is highly interesting for its special style of carving which differs greatly from the actual style at B.Changmō Nōi. We shall look into this problem later under "Art".

Final Remarks

In concluding this section it is to be noted that the *nyoe' nyū* spirit, so prominent with the northern Lawā, generally is called *sabaig* (B.Gōg Nōi : *sambaig* or *sōmbaig*, B.La'ub : *sabaid*). It is clear that this name is identical with *pī-sapaīt*, the designation of Steinmann/Rangsit (1939, 167) for the great village spirit in the Umphāi group. In many northern villages the village spirit is called *gum*, not identical with the *nyoe' nyū* spirit *sabaig*.

Similarly, their *ta-yuang* or 'village grandfather' of the Umphāi group, never mentioned in the north, reappears in B.Dong and B.La'ub as the great village spirit.

What we found in these two villages and in the northern ones is certainly at variance to some degree with the statements of Steinmann/Rangsit for the Umphāi group. Even if we take into account that there are great differences between the Lawā villages, especially between the southern and northern ones, we cannot deny that much clarification is still needed.

A special item is the question of the posts in front of a *nyoe' nyū* accompanied by two smaller posts, now called '*sabaig* with guardians' (B.Sām), now '*sagang sabaig* with two *ngū*' (B.La'āng Nuea and B.La'āng Tāi). Significantly B.Sām is a close neighbour of the two La'āng villages. In B.Pae' there is still another device: they have *sagangs* for the *nyoe nyū* spirit *sabaig* as well as, in another village quarter, for the village spirit *gum*.

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